THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
FEB 15 1943
THE LIBRARY

rick R. Bechdolt
Pendexter
der Maury
an Dunn
son Burtis
dams
e E. Holt
wnend
Mars
Sabalala

Digitized by Google

Radio Course FREE My new $45.00 Radio Course given free when you enroll for the Electrical Course—Mail Coupon.

Get Ready for a Big Pay Job

an Electrical Expert

Men like you are needed right now to fill big-paying jobs in the electrical field. There never was a time when opportunities for money-making were as good as they are now. Good jobs are open everywhere to men who know "what's what." Electrical Experts earn from $12 to $30 a day. Even the ordinary electricians get top-notch pay. Why don't you get in on this and get a real man's size job now? With my simplified Electrical Course I can quickly fit you to hold one. Read W. E. Pence's letter below. This is only one of thousands of such letters I have received.

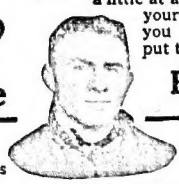
Earn $75 to $200 a Week

You Can Be a Big Money Maker

I have trained over 20,000 men in electricity—thousands of successful men all over the world attribute their success to my training. I can make you successful too. In fact I will guarantee your success. If you will follow my home study course you can become an expert, drawing a fat salary, in the same time it takes you to get a little raise in the work you are doing now.

Jumps From **$125** A Month to **$750** and Over

READ the Story of **W. E. Pence**



W. E. Pence in his working togs

Chehalis, Wash., Oct. 9, 1921

Mr Cooke:—

When I enrolled with you less than a year ago I was a common mechanic earning $25 to $30 a week. Today I am an "Electrical Expert" with a business of my own that gives me a clear profit of over $750 a month.

I have more work than I can do. The people around Chehalis come to me to fix their starters, generators and ignition troubles because they know that I know how to do it right.

My success, I owe to you, Mr. Cooke. The thorough practical training which you gave me through your Easily-learned Home Study Course in Electricity has made me an independent, highly respected business man in this community. Sincerely yours, W. E. Pence.

Age or Lack of Education No Handicap

No matter how old or how young you are, or what education you have, there is a real future for you in electricity. If you can read and write I can put you on the road to success. I can help you to a position that will make people admire you and look up to you.

Cash In on Your Spare Time

Use your spare time to get a better job. Most of us have enough spare time every day to sell a little at about $10.00 an hour. Sell some to yourself at this price. Watch how quick you will earn the money back if you put the time into study.

Electrical Working Outfit Free

Every man who enrolls for my electrical course gets a big outfit of tools, material and instruments free. This includes an electric motor and other things not usually found in a beginners outfit. These are the same tools and the same material you will use later in your work. Everything practical and good right from the start.

I Guarantee Your Complete Satisfaction

I am so sure I can make a big pay electrical expert out of you that I guarantee your success. I agree under bond to return every cent you pay me for tuition when you have finished the course, if you are not satisfied that it is the best investment you have ever made. If you don't make good, this million dollar institution will.

Act Right Now

Let me send you my big free book giving details of the opportunities electricity offers you and a sample lesson also free. Mail the coupon and get this at once. Learn how other men "got themselves ready to hold good paying jobs" and how I can help you do the same. This is your big chance—take it.

L. L. Cooke
Chief Engineer, Chicago Engineering Works,
Dept. 116 2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago, Ill

Dear Sir: Send at once Sample Lessons, your Big Book, and full particulars of your Free Outfit and Home Study Course—all fully prepaid without obligation on my part.

L. L. COOKE, Chief Engineer
CHICAGO ENGINEERING WORKS, Dept. 116
2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago

Name.....

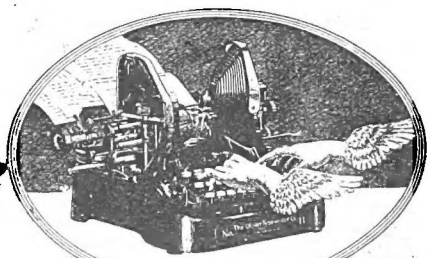
Address.....

Digitized by Google

FREE TRIAL EASY TERMS

To introduce the latest in Olivers, we ship it to you for five days' free trial and inspection. In the privacy of your own office or home, you can put it through every test and make comparisons with other standard typewriters. You will realize quickly that the Oliver Speedster, our latest model, fulfills our policy of "the finest typewriter possible at the lowest price always."

OLIVER



The Latest Model—No. 11

Speedster

Celebrating the production of our *millionth* Oliver, we announce a wonderful new model, the climax of 27 years of development. Its advancements are many. Its superiorities are countless. No description in mere print can do this super-typewriter full justice.

That is why we send it to you. We let it prove its own case. And we send it to you without the slightest obligation on your part to buy.

To see this Oliver Speedster and to operate it is to experience a new sensation in typing. To the operator it brings many welcome surprises.

No Longer $100

While this is a standard $100 typewriter, and while we sold Olivers at that price for years, we now ship direct from the factory to the buyer, eliminating many "in-between" expenses and extravagances.

This new plan of selling saves you $35, for we price this Oliver Speedster at only $65. If any typewriter is worth $100 or more, it is this remarkable new model. Sold the old way we would have to charge $100. Only by this new short-cut can we save you the $35 which formerly went into a complicated selling system.

Remember, we offer a brand new Oliver—not rebuilt, not second-hand, but our latest and finest model—speedier, quieter, more durable.

Here is our offer: We ship the Oliver to you if you mail us the coupon below. Try it for five days. Then if you agree that it is the finest typewriter, regardless of price, and want to own it, send us $4 after trial and then $4 per month.

If you prefer to pay $100 for some other typewriter, ship the Oliver back at our expense.

That is all there is to our plan. The Oliver must sell itself. You must be the judge. No one need influence you. You deal direct with the manufacturer.

Thousands have bought this new way. Over 1,000,000 Olivers have been sold. It is the favorite of big businesses as well as individuals.

If you prefer further information before ordering, note that the coupon may be checked for EITHER a Free Trial Oliver or Further Information.

SAVE $35

Why pay $100 for any typewriter when you can get our latest and finest for only $65? Why rent? Why buy a rebuilt typewriter? This Oliver offer is famous the world over. It set a new day in typewriter distribution. Mail the coupon at once.

The Oliver Typewriter Company
73C Oliver Typewriter Building Chicago, Ill.

Mail Now

THE OLIVER TYPEWRITER COMPANY
73C Oliver Typewriter Building, Chicago, Ill.

☐ Ship me a new Oliver No. 11 Typewriter for five days' free inspection. If I keep it I will pay $66 as follows: $4 at the end of trial period and then at the rate of $4 per month. The title to remain in you until fully paid for. If I make cash settlement at end of trial period I am to deduct ten per cent and remit to you $58.50. If I decide not to keep it, I will ship it back at your expense at the end of five days.

My shipping point is .....

☐ Do not send a machine until I order it. Mail me your book—"The High Cost of Typewriters—The Reason and the Remedy," the Speedster catalog and further information.

Name.....

Street Address .....

City..... State.....

Occupation or Business .....

ADVENTURE
Sept. 30th, 1922

Published three times a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $6.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Volume 36
Number 6

Digitized by Google

Ingersoll YANKEE

$1.50

The world's most popular watch—more than fifty million sold. Sturdy, reasonable, reliable, good-looking, it carries a sound guarantee.

The Yankee Radiolite is the same watch but tells time in the dark. $2.50.

The Ingersoll Waterbury is the stylish 12-size. Four jewels. $4.00. With Radiolite figures and hands. $5.00.

Ingersoll Watch Co., Inc.

Owned by the Waterbury Clock Company, world's largest manufacturers of watches and clocks

New York Chicago
San Francisco

Other Ingersolls up to $9.00

BERMUDA 8-DAY

Vacation Tours $83.00

9 days, $88.50 and up

Including All Expenses

LONGER TOURS IN PROPORTION

Via Palatial Steamers

With all the attractions of a delightful yachting trip to a quaint foreign land

S.S. "FORT VICTORIA"
S.S. "FORT ST. GEORGE"

Sailings Wednesdays and Saturdays

Bermuda is Cool in Summer
(Average Summer Temperature 77°)

Modern Hotels—All Outdoor Sports
Sailing, Bathing, Golf, Tennis, Riding, Driving, Cycling, Fishing, Dancing, etc.

NO PASSPORT REQUIRED

Send for Special Summer Tours Booklet

FURNESS BERMUDA LINE

34 Whitehall St., N. Y., or Any Tourist Agent

$100 a WEEK for DRAWING

How would you like to make $100 a week as a commercial artist? If you like to draw, you are indeed fortunate—well-trained artists are always at a premium. They readily earn $75, $100, $150 a week, and even more, and beginners with practical ability soon command $50 a week.

LEARN QUICKLY AT HOME IN YOUR SPARE TIME

Develop your talent—put your natural ability to its best use. The Federal "Master" Course, endorsed by high authorities, teaches you by mail in your spare time. No experience needed, each step is clearly explained. You receive individual personal criticisms on all your lessons.

Send for "Your Future," a splendid book showing work of Federal Students, telling all about this remarkable course, and pointing out opportunities that will surprise you. If you are in earnest and 16 years old or more, write today for this free book, kindly stating your age.

FEDERAL SCHOOL OF COMMERCIAL DESIGNING, 1216 Federal Schools Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn.

FOR CAMP & SUMMER WEAR

Best quality, lowest prices. Our money back guarantee covers all purchases.

ARMY SHELTER TENTS	**$1.50**
Folding Shelter Tent Poles	**.25**
Khaki Riding Breeches	**.75**
Khaki Trousers	**2.25**
Khaki Shirts	**.95**
Camp Cooking Grates	**.30**
Folding Mess Pans	**.25**
Athletic Shirts	**.50**
Army Folding Cots	**4.00**
Army O. D. Wool Blankets	**2.75**

Army tents all sizes and 5,000 other articles for camps or outings. Send 10c. for big catalog 157.

RUSSELL'S, Inc.
245 W. 42d Street New York
Formerly Army & Navy Store Co.

$2,800 in 2 HOURS!

—is what your Genuine Chinese Good Luck ring brought me," says Fannie Brice. Hundreds tell us our ring brought success in love, business and financially. Ours is the genuine and original ring, stamped inside with the $. Believed by Ancients to bring Good Luck, Health, Happiness, Prosperity. Solid Sterling silver. Price, Postpaid, Cash with order $1.50, or, C.O.D. $1.60. **THE ZANZIBAR CO., Dept. 215, 109 West 42nd Street, New York City.**

SAY!

Thousands have; why don't you improve your financial condition? Operate a **Kingery** Popcorn Popper, Peanut Roaster or Popcorn Fritter Outfit. 70 cents profit on every dollar. Many styles and sizes. Popping 40 quarts to 12 bushels per hour. Roasting 12 quarts to 5 bushels. Prices **$40** to **$1550.** Liberal terms. Catalog free.

KINGERY MFG. CO., Est. 1881
Dept. A-F CINCINNATI, OHIO

Digitized by Google

"I Got the Job!"

"I'm to be Manager of my Department starting Monday. The boss said he had been watching all the men. When he found I had been studying at home with the International Correspondence Schools he knew I had the right stuff in me—that I was bound to make good. Now we can move over to that house on Oakland Avenue and you can have a maid and take things easy. I tell you, Nell, taking that course with the I. C. S. was the best thing I ever did."

Spare-time study with the I. C. S. is winning promotions for thousands of men and bringing happiness to thousands of homes all over the world. In offices, shops, stores, mines, mills and on railroads, I. C. S. trained men are stepping up to big jobs, over the heads of older men, past those whose only qualification is long service.

There is a job ahead of *you* that some man is going to be picked for. The boss can't take chances. When he selects the one to hold it he is going to choose a trained man with sound, practical knowledge of the work. Get busy right now and put yourself in line for that promotion. You can do it in spare time in your own home through the International Correspondence Schools, just as more than two million men have done in the last thirty years; just as more than 150,000 men are doing today.

The first step these men took was to mark and mail this coupon. Make *your* start the same way—and make it right now.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2045-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me full information about the subject *before* which I have marked an X in the list below:

BUSINESS TRAINING DEPARTMENT

☐ Business Management	☐ Salesmanship
☐ Industrial Management	☐ Advertising
☐ Personnel Organization	☐ Better Letters
☐ Traffic Management	☐ Foreign Trade
☐ Business Law	☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Banking and Banking Law	☐ Business English
☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)	☐ Civil Service
☐ Nicholson Cost Accounting	☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Bookkeeping	☐ Common School Subjects
☐ Private Secretary	☐ High School Subjects
☐ Business Spanish ☐ French	☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEPARTMENT

☐ Electrical Engineering	☐ Architect
☐ Electric Lighting	☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Mechanical Engineer	☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Mechanical Draftsman	☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Machine Shop Practice	☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Railroad Positions	☐ Plumbing and Heating
☐ Gas Engine Operating	☐ Chemistry
☐ Civil Engineer	☐ Pharmacy
☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Automobile Work
☐ Mine Foreman or Engineer	☐ Navigation
☐ Steam Engineering	☐ Agriculture and Poultry
☐ Radio ☐ Airplane Engines	☐ Mathematics

Name.....
Street 6-23-22
Address.....
City..... State.....
Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

Digitized by Google

It *Pays* to Keep Folks Well

341,000 Happy People—
in the United States and Canada sat down last year to their Christmas dinners who wouldn't have been there if the death rate for 1921 had been the same as it was in 1911.

What happened to make conditions so much better? There has been a constantly growing organized effort to prolong human life.

Anti-tuberculosis associations, welfare organizations, nursing orders and legislative bodies have all taken a hand. The results show that lives have been and *can* be lengthened by the wise use of money, and that such an investment pays dividends in dollars.

When a breadwinner is taken away—
the family is poorer. A community suffers a very definite economic loss when it loses a number of lives. It increases the cost of living to have workers die needlessly. It increases taxes—to say nothing of the sorrow and unhappiness involved.

Digitized by Google

It *Pays* to Keep Folks Well

As soon as people realize—

that the wealth of the nation depends upon the men and women who make up the nation, the tremendous financial importance of prolonging human life becomes clear to everybody.

The United States is said to be the richest country in the world. Take every man and woman away and what would it be worth? Not so much as it was when the red Indians owned it.

Even the unskilled laborer who works his full life-time makes the nation richer by several thousand dollars. It follows, therefore, that down to the smallest tax payer in the last small community, everybody is better off when lives are saved.

The work already done—

has saved the lives of fathers, mothers and children.

Saving fathers keeps families from becoming dependent.

Saving mothers helps to hold families together and keeps children out of public institutions.

Saving children adds to the future wealth of the nation.

Protected Health means fewer deaths. Fewer deaths mean fewer policies to pay.

Just among the Metropolitan's 14,000,000 policy holders who paid their premiums weekly, there were 55,000 fewer deaths in 1921 than there would have been under the death rate prevailing ten years before.

Take the figures home to yourself. Suppose you are a Metropolitan policy holder—one of these 55,000 saved from death—your family is richer by the money you earned in 1921 and has been saved expenses incident to illness and death.

Other Metropolitan policy holders have been benefited by the premiums you paid in 1921, just as *you* have benefited by other lives saved.

The nation is better off for your contribution to the Country's wealth in 1921.

And, best of all, your family and friends are richer and happier by the fact that you yourself are still alive.

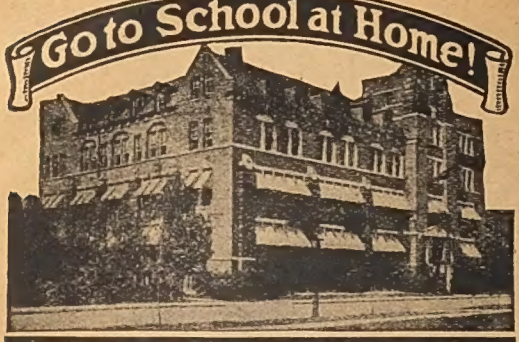
The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company will send its booklet, "How to Live Long," to anyone who asks for it.

HALEY FISKE, *President*

Published by

METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY—NEW YORK

Digitized by Google



High School Course in Two Years!

Lack of High School Training has kept thousands of men and women from attaining **business and social position.** Without this training you are absolutely barred from a successful business career, from leading professions, from well-paid civil service jobs, from teaching and college entrance. In fact, all **preferred positions** are closed to you without this vital training. You can't stand this heavy handicap nor do you have to. The American School can give you the valuable training you missed.

Put Your Idle Hours to Work

You can complete our simplified High School Course within two years by spare-time study. Then you will be mentally equipped to handle a worthwhile position. This course, prepared by some of America's leading professors, will broaden your mind, give you a wider outlook and make you keen, alert and capable.

Remove Your Handicap

Whether you need High School Training or specialized instruction in your chosen line—NOW is the time to remove your handicap. You must know the short cuts and efficiency methods. You must know the HOW and WHY. Over 50,000 students owe their success to training received from the practical, money-making Courses in the coupon below. Let us tell you about this training—about the Course you are interested in. Check and mail the coupon.

American School
Dept. H-64, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago

American School
Dept. H-64, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago

Send me full information on the subject checked and how you will help me win success.

.... Architect	.... Lawyer
.... Building Contractor	.... Machine Shop Practice
.... Automobile Engineer	.... Photoplay Writer
.... Automobile Repairman	.... Mechanical Engineer
.... Civil Engineer	.... Shop Superintendent
.... Structural Engineer	.... Employment Manager
.... Business Manager	.... Steam Engineer
.... Cert. Public Accountant	.... Foremanship
.... Accountant and Auditor	.... Sanitary Engineer
.... Bookkeeper	.... Surveyor (& Mapping)
.... Draftsman and Designer	.... Telephone Engineer
.... Electrical Engineer	.... Telegraph Engineer
.... Electric Light & Power	.... High School Graduate
.... General Education	.... Fire Insurance Expert
.... Vocational Guidance	.... Wireless Radio
.... Business Law	.... Undecided

Name .....

Address .....

DIAMONDS ON CREDIT

Free Book of
Diamond Bargains

Send for the most complete catalog of Diamonds and Jewelry ever published showing exquisite gifts of every description—every article a rare bargain.

Anything you select will be sent for FREE examination and approval. If satisfied, pay only 1/5 purchase price—balance in 10 months. Send TODAY for catalog **No. 302-P.**

SWEET *Engagement Ring set with perfectly cut, blue-white Diamond.*

Price $45
Terms: $9 Down—$3.60 a Month

Solitaires from $25 to $1000

"THE HOUSE OF QUALITY"
L·W·SWEET INC.
1650-1660 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

An Easy Way to Remove Dandruff

If you want plenty of thick, beautiful, glossy, silky hair, do by all means get rid of dandruff, for it will starve your hair and ruin it if you don't.

The best way to get rid of dandruff is to dissolve it. To do this, just apply a little Liquid Arvon at night before retiring; use enough to moisten the scalp, and rub it in gently with the finger tips.

By morning, most, if not all, of your dandruff will be gone, and three or four more applications should completely remove every sign and trace of it.

You will find, too, that all itching of the scalp will stop, and your hair will look and feel a hundred times better. You can get Liquid Arvon at any drug store. A four-ounce bottle is usually all that is needed.

The R. L. Watkins Co., Cleveland, Ohio

Agents

LARGE MANUFACTURER OF SHIRTS wants Agents to sell complete line of shirts direct to wearer. Exclusive patterns. Big values. No capital or experience required. Write for free samples.

MADISON SHIRT MILLS
507 Broadway New York, N. Y.

$$$ paid for your spare time. Write for details. No obligation.
Staff Agencies Division, 872 Butterick Bldg., N. Y. City

Kindly mention Adventure in writing to advertisers or visiting your dealer.

Digitized by Google

We Have Cut The Price on our great AUTO BOOKS

HERE is your opportunity to secure a complete reference library that contains all the "ins" and "outs" of one of the biggest industries of the country.

The ready reference value of these books will place you in a position of success and power. **They'll raise your pay.** They will tell you all the country's best known experts can tell you about the care and repair of motor vehicles and tractors.

This library contains 2600 pages and 2300 pictures, diagrams and blue prints. These books are absolutely up-to-date, written in clear every day English that anyone can understand, bound in flexible American morocco, gold stamped. Let us send you this reference library today for a week's

Free Examination

Use these books in your home or in your shop for 7 days, without obligating yourself in any way. Ask your friends what they think of them. Put them to the test of every day working problems.

If at the end of 7 days you decide not to keep them, return them to us at our expense.

YOU SAVE $23

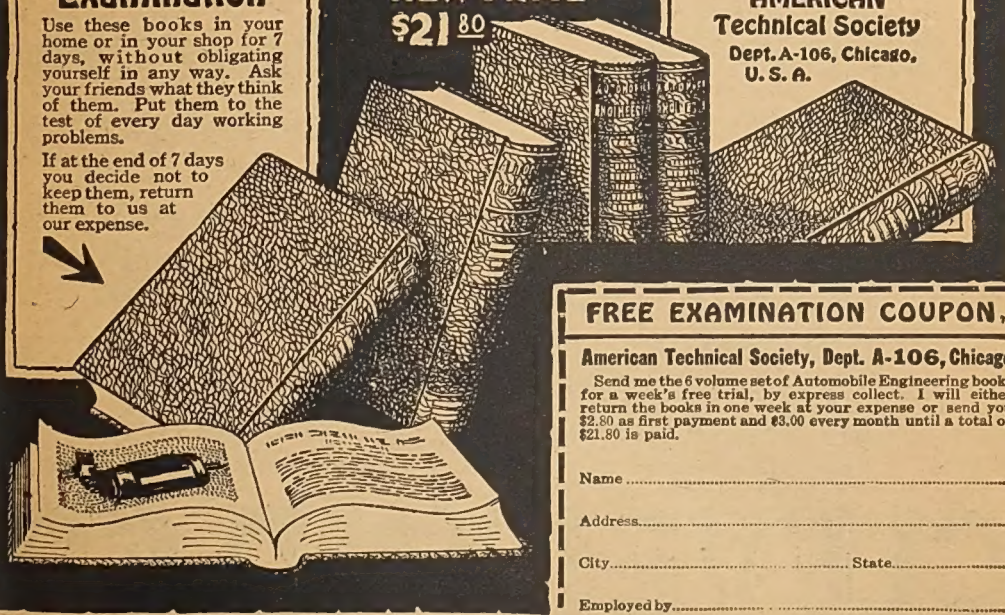
REGULAR PRICE $45
NEW PRICE $21.80

Don't Send Money

Just fill out and mail the coupon below. The books will be shipped immediately, by express, collect. We are making this free examination offer because we know that once you have examined these books you will want them. They must sell themselves.

If you decide to keep them, simply send us $2.80 as first payment, and $3.00 each month thereafter until the special reduced price of $21.80 is paid.

AMERICAN Technical Society
Dept. A-106, Chicago, U. S. A.



FREE EXAMINATION COUPON

American Technical Society, Dept. A-106, Chicago

Send me the 6 volume set of Automobile Engineering books for a week's free trial, by express collect. I will either return the books in one week at your expense or send you $2.80 as first payment and $3.00 every month until a total of $21.80 is paid.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

Employed by .....

Digitized by Google

THE WONDER CAR OF THE YEAR

SEDAN
$1595

Today's Best Buy In Closed Cars

No other Six cylinder sedan with Fisher-built body is priced so low as this new Cleveland Six.

Yet the fact remains that its new style and advanced chassis design have made it the choice of thousands of owners to whom its remarkably low cost was a secondary consideration.

Touring Car $1195 Roadster $1175 Coupe $1550 All Prices F. O. B. Cleveland

CLEVELAND AUTOMOBILE CO. · CLEVELAND
Export Dept: 1819 Broadway, New York City Cable Address: "Cleveauto"

CLEVELAND SIX

Kindly mention Adventure in writing to advertisers or visiting your dealer.

Digitized by Google

Adventure

Reg. in U. S. Patent Office

SEP 30 1922
Vol XXXVI No 6

Published Three Times a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President — C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York City
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $6.00 in Advance — **Single Copy, Twenty-Five Cents**

Foreign Postage, $3.00 additional. Canadian Postage, 90 cents.

Trade-Mark Registered; Copyright, 1922, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain.
The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Contents for September 30th, 1922, Issue

Gold of the Yellow Gods *A Complete Novelette* . . . **Magruder Maury** 3
Africa—hidden treasure.

Red Blood and White . . . . . **Frederick R. Bechdolt** 46
The West—a little survivor of an Indian massacre.

Two Men—and a Boat . . . . . **J. Allan Dunn** 56
South Sea—adrift under a tropic sun.

The World's Largest Cave *A Bit about South Dakota* . . **Earl H. Emmons** 64

By Imperial Post . . . . . **George E. Holt** 65
Morocco—a clerk gums up the works.

Over the Rim of the Ridge *A Four-Part Story Part II* . . **Hugh Pendexter** 68
The Territory of Nevada—*Washoe* makes more enemies.

Twinkle-Bright *An Off-the-Trail Story** . . . . . **Bill Adams** 98
The sea—becalmed.

Pointed Teeth *An Article* . . . . . **Santie Sabalala** 109
South Africa—cannibals.

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

(Continued on next page)

Digitized by Google

(*Continued from preceding page*)

Arms and the Beetle . . . . . **F. St. Mars** 120
The seashore—a miniature gunner.

The Go-Gitter . . . . . **Stephen M. Walmsley** 127
The Border—abduction, and a ride for vengeance.

The Beach-Comber . . . . . **W. Townend** 130
Mr. Harrington—and a bum.

The Education of Snapper MacNeil *A Complete Novelette* . **Thomson Burtis** 140
Air service—feud warfare n the hills.

The Camp-Fire A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers 176

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 183

Lost Trails 183

Ask Adventure 185

Our Assaying and Oil Services 185

Weapons, Past and Present 185

Fishing in North America 185

Mountains and Mountaineering 185

Old Songs That Men Have Sung 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . . **John R. Neill**

Cover Design . . . . . **James C. McKell**

CHEOPS, called Khufu, King of Egypt, was supposed to have buried fabulous wealth in his secret tomb. Men of four nations sit in on the game to solve this mystery of engineering with *Grim, Ramsden & Ross* holding a Chinese "ace in the hole." "KHUFU'S REAL TOMB," a novel by Talbot Mundy, complete in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Don't forget the dates of issue for *Adventure*—the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month

Digitized by Google

Adventure
Sept. 30 1922
Vol. XXXVI No. 6

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE
by Magruder Maury

GOLD OF THE YELLOW GODS

THE tail-end of a sou'easter was whipping the white caps of Table Bay into a race of white horses and piling huge, tumbled masses of gray cloud on the top of Table Mountain as I walked down the gang-plank of a decrepit brig from Cardiff and strolled, disconsolate, in the direction of a public house, where I knew I could find a warm fire and a touch of human companionship.

For two weeks I had been on the beach at Cape Town—one of the most Godforgotten places on earth I thought it then. My last ship had left me there six weeks before to wait while a broken ankle-bone knit and had gone on her way with the second mate filling my place as first. In a month the bone had knit all safe and sound, and for the last fourteen days I had been haunting the water-front in the hope of finding a ship that would take me back into home waters. My very soul hungered for the sound of homey Yankee speech.

At the entrance to the pub I turned to watch a big East Indiaman, her Blue Peter flying, and surrounded by a cluster of shore boats, including a snorting, officious little side-wheel tug. She was getting ready to resume her voyage to Calcutta or Bombay.

I sighed. I don't know anything more dismal than watching a ship getting ready to sail when you're to be left behind. I wanted an American boat, by preference, but, lacking that, any sort of a boat. Six years and more I had been afloat and I had never got over the desire to be on any ship I might see hoisting her mudhook.

I was still absorbed in the topmen when the door of the pub opened with a bang and a tight cluster of humanity rocketed forth and burst like a shell at my feet. With one accord the component parts of the cluster gathered themselves together and resumed the fight, three of them attacking the fourth.

I watched at first without action. My years at sea had taught me to keep my

"Gold of the Yellow Gods," copyright, 1922, by Magruder Maury.

Copyright, 1922, by the Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. All rights reserved.

Digitized by Google

hands off the fights of other people as long as possible.

However, when the biggest and brawniest of the attackers backed off, picked up a stone from the gutter and aimed it at the head of the attacked, I forgot all precepts and horned in, catching the thrower's wrist with my hand.

He squirmed around and struck at me, but I tripped him up and flung him into the gutter. Then I set my foot on him.

"Lie there," I told him, "until you cool off a bit. December's no time o' year to be taking all this exercise in Cape Town."

The fall of their pal had scared the other two rowdies, who were now racing up the street while the man they had assailed stood, breathing a little hard, but with a wry-lipped smile and returning my stare with interest.

"He started the rumpus," he said, nodding at the man in the gutter, "when he tried to force himself on that little barmaid inside. Maybe it was none of my business, but I can't stand by and see a woman annoyed, whether she's behind a bar or in a drawing room. You may let him go now, if you like."

I removed my foot from the ruffian's chest, and he scrambled up and slouched off after the other two, swearing by all his Cockney gods.

The stranger, a tall lath of a man with bulging jaw-bone muscles and powerful shoulders that stooped a little, stuck a tremendous hand out to me.

"Much obliged," he said in a voice that had in it a pleasant rasp. "You have a nifty trick with your hands."

"So-so," I admitted. "I learned that trick from a Japanese in Manila."

"A sailorman, by the cut of your jib, and berthed abaft the mizzen, if I'm not mistaken."

"First mate's papers," I acknowledged.

"What ship?"

I told him about the broken ankle.

His shrewd eyes, set back under pent-house brows, scanned me from the top of my best hat down to my dusty shoes.

"Ankle all right now!" he asked at length.

"Good as new," I said. "Bit stiff yet, but that'll pass off when I get to sea."

"Want to ship as second mate?"

I hesitated. The last voyage had been my first as mate, and I hated to drop back. But I remembered the sneering look on the face of the first mate of the Cardiff brig when I had applied for a berth.

"Yes," I answered.

"Good," he said. "My name's Yankton—Doremus Yankton, master of the American bark out there in the bay. See her? She's the one with the white band at the water-line and the square patch on her fores'l. You can make it out when the sail lifts with the breeze."

I nodded. I had been admiring the bark that morning and wondering if I could afford a shore boat out to her on the off chance of finding a billet. She had the prettiest rake imaginable to her sticks, and the American cotton canvas of her sails hanging in bunts from her yards shone white in comparison with the browner cloths blowing out from the clumsy spars of the huge Indiaman.

"Looks like she could walk along," I said huskily.

Captain Yankton must have known how I felt, for he smiled his funny, twisted smile again and said—

"Would a drop of moisture aid in settling things in their proper perspective?"

Few sea-captains of my acquaintance talked that way. I must have stared my amazement, for he threw his head back and emitted a rumbling, infectious laugh. I laughed too, without quite knowing why.

"Along with you, then," he said, and we went into the private bar of the pub and sat at a cozy table.

He called for the drinks.

"Trying to get my rating?" he asked as he turned back to me from the rather pretty barmaid who had answered his call and who smiled on him a bit tearfully.

I admitted the charge. I had been looking at him pretty closely, and I had some excuse. He was not an ordinary looking man in any sense of the word. He was tall, well over six feet two, I should have said off-hand, and thin as a rail, but the thinness was no sign of weakness. Even if I had not seen him holding his own against three others I should have known this. He was powerful. The muscles writhed and coiled under the tight blue jacket he was wearing, and the neck beneath the blue and white neckerchief was comparatively short and thick.

But it was the face that most attracted me—the look in the eyes and about the mouth that seemed to say that whatever

Digitized by Google

reservations this man had within himself, none of them held fear.

"Well?" he asked coolly.

"Not to be too free with my captain, sir," I said. "I think you and I'll get along well together."

"Stand up!" he commanded.

I did so, and he came around the table and held his right arm horizontally out from his side. It just barely grazed the top of my eyebrow.

"Five feet, eight inches, sir," I told him. "Forty-two inches chest measure; thirty-six hips. I can't give the biceps, calves or neck. Do you always measure your mates by yourself?"

"You'll do, you'll do," he said, heartily. "Drink your whisky and get away and bring your sea-chest. Owe any money? No? That's good. Off with you, then and fetch your sea-chest. I'll wait for you here."

AN hour later, my sea-chest perched in the stern sheets of a natty little boat manned by three Kroo boys, we pulled off from the wharf for the *Dancing Sue*, the name of Captain Yankton's bark. I filled my lungs with the clean salt air and, with a sigh of relief lighted my pipe.

The captain evidently shared my satisfaction.

"Lucky for us both we found each other," said he. "If we hadn't, the *Dancing Sue* would have sailed without a second mate, and you'd have stayed ashore without a berth. What did you say your name was?"

"I didn't say," I responded," but it's Clay Dabney. Born in Charlottesville, Virginia, twenty-six years ago; four years in the Navy and two as second mate and mate on merchant craft. Other details to be furnished on arrival of consignment."

"All right, Mr. Dabney," spoke my captain with a laugh. "As I said before, you'll do."

There was no further talk until we rounded under the stern of the *Dancing Sue*, whose lines got sweeter and trimmer the closer you got to her. The bow oarsman caught a line trailing over the low bulwarks, and we swung in under a ladder that hung overboard from near the break of the poop.

I followed the captain overside and came upon an oddly arranged and strangely cluttered deck. It was spacious and had a fine sheer to it, but on either side was a row of stalls facing inward, and in each stall was a donkey. In all, there were twenty-four of these donkey-filled stalls.

"What in the ——" I began.

"We're taking them north with us," said Captain Yankton, "but never mind the donkeys now. Come below and I'll introduce you to the first mate, Elias Billings."

He walked toward the door that opened out of the poop on to the main deck. As he reached it he turned toward me and said:

"Mr. Billings is part owner of this ship and her cargo. I own the other part. The carpenter, the boatswain, the first mate, yourself and me—we're the only white men aboard. The rest are Kroo boys, except for a couple of American darkies I've had with me for a long time. You'll find them all good men."

Then he opened the door.

In the cabin a funny little man was waiting for us. When he stood up he looked like a beer barrel on skids. He was as fat as the captain was lean, as short as Yankton was long, and his eyes, instead of being half-hidden under bushy cliffs, bulged out pale blue beneath scant, colorless eyebrows. When he spoke his nose twitched like the nose of a rabbit nibbling a cabbage. He was Elias Billings, the first mate.

Captain Yankton went out and left us to get acquainted.

"Fine fellow, the captain," said Billings. "Best I ever sailed with, sailed with. Fine thing he found you. Providential, I'd call it. Yes, sir, I'd call it providential. We needed a mate the worst way, the worst way. And an American, too. Yes, sir, American, too."

He clucked away to me in that fashion while I stowed my gear in the neat little cabin berth they'd assigned me, repeating the last word or two of nearly every sentence. This sounded funny at first, but grew mighty tiresome as he kept it up. I finished unpacking, got into working clothes and went on deck.

I found Captain Yankton talking with the carpenter, Wilkes, by name, a Scotchman with a real Clyde-side accent and a kindly twinkle in his single eye. The other eye, I found out later, had been shot out during a fight while he was a private in the British Army, serving on the Indian frontier. Jenkins, the boatswain, came along and extended a friendly hand to me while Wilkes was talking.

And then the Kroo boys gathered about

Digitized by Google

the capstan, shipped the bars and, with a song that was a sort of rumbling, rhythmic groan, began heaving on the dripping hempen anchor-cable.

The *Dancing Sue* gathered way. With the sun sinking back of the smoky top of Table Mountain and the long gray swells from the Antarctic rolling shoreward in endless ranks, I said good-by to Cape Town and rejoiced so openly that the black men of the crew, great husky fellows, bare from the waist up and from the knees down, laughed with me.

The rest of that afternoon and evening was spent in clearing the ship of the shore duffel that littered her decks, battening down everything loose and getting ready for the weather we might expect off Cape Agulhas and the coming of the northeast monsoon when we got into Mozambique Channel.

But by the next afternoon I'd had time to look about and think a little. Much as I liked my captain, certain things aboard the *Dancing Sue* had roused my suspicion.

First, there were the donkeys. Yankton's bare statement that he was taking the animals north did not explain their presence on the ship. I wondered about that before I began to wonder why the bark carried so many black boys forward—two or three times the number actually needed to work the ship.

We had rounded Cape Agulhas and were headed northeast by east, with the kick of the Agulhas Current and a strong sou'-easter' to help us, before I came to the conclusion that whatever else the *Dancing Sue* was going to do, she was not going out as a trader this cruise.

I tried to pump Billings, but the mate, though he'd talk twice about almost every other topic under the sun, dodged any reference to the destination or errand of the bark. 'Rastus, cabin steward, one of the American darkies, and a native of my own state, delighted in the sound of his own voice, but he never raised it in a word about the *Dancing Sue's* present voyage.

Just as my curiosity was nearing the bursting point the captain himself cleared up the mystery—and with a story that almost took my breath away.

He had come upon me as I sat on an overturned bucket sewing a bolt rope in the foot of a spare mainsail. He was smoking a big Dutch china pipe, filled with natural leaf, which he carried in a sealskin tobacco pouch. He stood and watched me for a while in silence. Finally he took the pipe from his mouth, knocked the ashes out of it, dropped it in his pocket and looked down at me.

"I see you close-reefed the tops'ls, Dabney," he commented. "Why?"

"No need to yank the sticks out of her, sir," said I.

"No, but her gear's all new, and we want to make time. I want to see the castle at Zanzibar as soon as the Lord'll let us. Crack on, crack on all you can."

I told him I was thinking of his property.

"Don't, then," he said curtly. "Speed, man, speed!"

I jumped to my feet and called the watch, shook out the reefs and set the jib, fore and main royals and was about to start the men on the gaff topsail when the captain spoke again.

"That'll do," he said. "She'll walk over 'em now."

But she didn't. She dragged through them, the pressure of the wind on her widespread canvas forcing her over until she seemed to travel more on her side than on her keel. I glanced at Yankton and saw him glowering. Then a boyish grin came over his face.

"Guess you were right, Dabney," he said. "I'm wrong. Get some of those rags off her quick. And, man, don't mind me. You know your work. I'm in a devil of a hurry to get to Zanzibar, but I shall not interfere any more."

He turned and walked back to the poop, while I stripped off some of the cloths I'd just put on her and the *Dancing Sue*, relieved, righted herself and seemed actually to gain in the speed with which she went rushing through the deep blue of the Indian Ocean.

When she was easier again, and I had checked the course with a glance at the swinging compass card, the captain called me.

"There's the African coast over yonder," he said, pointing to a dim, misty blue haze against the western horizon. "Africa, most wonderful of all the continents. I know, for I've seen them all. Seven years since I saw Africa the first time. I vowed then I'd make my fortune in Africa, or die there. I've done neither yet—but I'm going to."

He paused, and then went on.

Digitized by Google

"I suppose men would call me a gambler, and I suppose they would be right. A gambler I am, with Fate to match coins with me. When Billings relieves you, Dabney, come to my cabin. There's something I've got to tell you."

Without another word he went below.

II

THE cuddy of the *Dancing Sue* was a pleasant place, as pleasant a place as I've ever been in at sea. The poop skylight made cheery the rather large central compartment, off which opened four smaller rooms. Two of these were used by the first mate and myself. The other two served as extra store-rooms for the captain's books and personal supplies. Back of the cuddy, and extending across the ship, was the cabin Yankton occupied.

After I had washed my face and hands and tried to bring some sort of order to my mop of sandy hair, I obeyed orders and went to the stern cabin.

Captain Yankton was sitting in a big canvas-covered, homemade chair. At his elbow was a handsome table of a highly polished hardwood I thought I recognized as the koa of the Sandwich Islands. He was reading a carefully bound copy of the Nautical Almanac and appeared to have been making calculations on some paper that lay beside him on the table.

He laid down the book and pencil as I entered and waved me to a seat on the stern locker which ran all around the cabin under the stern windows.

I sat down and looked about the room. It piqued my curiosity. It seemed to me so typical of the man who used it.

The reflected rays from the water overside through the windows—unusually large windows they were for a craft the size of the *Dancing Sue*—lighted the room resplendently, falling upon the rows of books that filled the shelves which lined the forward bulkhead and all of one side. The other side was taken up with a curiously carved bed, of which I could just see the foot, the rest being hidden by a Chinese screen.

Captain Yankton regarded me speculatively.

"Are you old enough to believe things?" he asked.

I reckon I grinned a little at that and came back with:

"I don't know, sir. They would have to be by ordinary strange and out of the way to pass some of the things I've seen myself."

At that he smiled, leaned back in his chair and fell to puffing his great pipe. Presently he began to talk, and the gist of his preamble was this:

A year before, while trading on the Zambesi River, he had run across an odd-looking negro who had been, at one time *mkama* or sub-king of a native tribe far in the interior. He was a sort of witch-doctor, although he refused to claim that title, and was possessed of more than ordinary intelligence. The name of the man was Mum Tumbo, and the people over whom he had helped to rule lived many miles north of the Zambesi, by a river from which came the gold of the Yellow Gods.

"The gold of the Yellow Gods?" I exclaimed, not sure I had heard aright.

"Gold of the Yellow Gods," he repeated, smiling that curious smile I'd noticed before when he was serious about anything.

"Mum Tumbo told me all about it," he went on, after a slight pause. "For many generations his tribe had worshiped a hill spirit believed to have his abode inside a mountain not far from the central town of that country. To this god-spirit was made an image, round-bellied and tubby, about two feet high, and of solid gold."

"My Lord!" I ejaculated, my imagination stirred by the vision of so much gold. "Did they have more than one of these images?"

"Two or three, I gathered from what Mum Tumbo said. And what is still more curious, they had a custom in very ancient times, this high chief of theirs told me, of melting down the god of the village following some terrible disaster and pouring the molten metal through a small hole in a great rock on the side of the hill or mountain where the god-spirit was supposed to dwell. After that the priests and the people, led by the king, would go to a placer mine on the river bank and wash out enough gold to make another image and install that, with much ceremony, in place of the disgraced and melted idol."

I whistled my astonishment.

"How often did they do this?" I asked.

"Only when, in spite of their offerings and prayers to the Yellow God, some terrible calamity overtook them. Mum Tumbo said it had not happened within his recollection, but he had seen the cavern

Digitized by Google

into which the melted gold of the god poured."

"So that's what the donkeys on deck and the extra black boys are for, is it?" I said, beginning to see the light.

"Exactly." Yankton smiled. "I've seen you were almost bursting with curiosity. I'd have told you before, but I wanted to study you a while before I let you come into our little party."

"I've passed muster then?" I said. "I'm glad. I don't know how much gold you may give me for my share, but I wouldn't have missed this chance for all of it."

"There's more you must know," said the captain as I got up excitedly and began to pace back and forth the depth of the cabin in front of his table.

"Yes?" I asked, sitting down again.

"Of course it was impossible for us to go off unprepared on a trip into the interior of Africa. Besides, I had a full cargo under hatches and had to get back to Cape Town as soon as I could. I explained this to Mum Tumbo, who seemed very anxious to have us start at once."

"Why?" I broke in. "If the gold is sacred and belongs to his tribe, I shouldn't think he'd want it touched. Why did he tell you about it?"

"For some inscrutable reason of his own, I suppose. He doubtless wants some of the gold for himself, having learned the value of gold along with all the rest he's learned from the white man. He's a most extraordinary native. Speaks good English and can read and write. He's more than intelligent—he's uncannily wise, for he's added civilized learning to himself without losing any of his savage instincts. I fancy he doesn't believe any too deeply in the religion of his tribe, however.

"Anyway," continued the captain, "I'm not worrying about why he told me of the gold. I'm worrying about how to get hold of it. Mum Tumbo has been shanghaied by Arab slavers, led by Dom Silva, a Portuguese half-caste, who is the devil incarnate and is now in a slave barracoon either in Zanzibar or on Pemba Island."

"Does this Dom Silva know about the gold?"

"He may have got hold of some rumor that has led him to suspect its existence," said Yankton. "He'd never get any sort of information out of Mum Tumbo himself, but there are always leaks. I'm quite sure that we shall have Dom Silva to reckon with."

Going back to his final talk with Mum Tumbo, Captain Yankton told me that the African had agreed for him and Billings to go to Cape Town with their cargo and there make the necessary preparations for a lengthy trek into the up-country. Meanwhile Mum Tumbo was to stay in a little town near the mouth of the Zambesi—Quiliame, I believe—where the *Dancing Sue* would pick him up.

Hurrying back to Cape Town, Yankton had got rid of his cargo and was preparing to load for the gold-hunting expedition when word reached him from Mum Tumbo himself to delay. He took a cargo up the coast, stopped at the little town and there learned that Mum Tumbo had been captured by Dom Silva's slavers.

"Without him we could do nothing," continued the captain of the *Dancing Sue*. "I had no idea how to get to the land of the Yellow Gods. My first job was to find Mum Tumbo. Without—I hope—attracting too much attention, I put agents to work and managed to find out that he was being held then on Pemba Island and that Dom Silva had refused some good offers for him.

"I waited for two months. About two weeks before I met you in Cape Town I got word to hasten to Zanzibar where I would get news and instructions as to how to proceed. One of my mates had died, or I could have left at once."

So that was why we were to crack on all sail!

I was too excited to sit still. I shivered with sheer delight. Here was romance. Strange peoples, strange lands, the promise of incredible adventure—and the gold of the Yellow Gods!

Captain Yankton's voice broke in on my day-dreaming only to add to it.

"My plan after leaving Zanzibar is to make for a river somewhere south, sail up it as far as we can and there careen the *Dancing Sue* and have her cleaned. While Billings attends to that part of the work, with Jennings and some of the crew to help him, you and I and Wilkes, taking the extra blacks as bearers and the donkeys as a packtrain, will let Mum Tumbo—for I expect to have him with us—guide us into the unknown where we shall see what we shall see."

I fairly wiggled with anticipation. After

Digitized by Google

all, I was only a puppy in those days.

"About the gold—" my captain was pursuing the course of his talk—"I figure that the ship should pay the black boys and all expenses and take a third. The other thirds should be divided into sixths, one-sixth for Mum Tumbo and one for each of us whites."

"Couldn't be fairer," said I.

"That's all settled then."

As he said this, the captain rose leisurely from his chair, went to a cupboard and drew out a square-faced bottle and a couple of glasses. A tiny thimbleful for himself he poured, and a more generous portion for me.

"Here's to the frustration of Dom Silva," he said, touching my glass.

"And to the gold of the Yellow Gods!" I added.

"It's the same thing," said my captain. "If we get Tumbo and spoil Dom Silva's plans, we're pretty sure to find the gold. If we get the gold, we shall surely frustrate Dom Silva."

"Then here's to us, and to our success!" said I, and we drank to the amended toast.

I went to my cabin to try to get some sleep before going on watch again. But sleep was at first far from me. The slanting rays of the sun touched the blue of the Indian Ocean and then slipped through my port. In them I saw visions of masses of gold, shining dull yellow and waiting only to be taken. After a while the sunlight seemed to be drifting down through a rock high above my head.

I was dreaming of a cave filled with gold. And through my dreams, like a chime of discordant bells, rang the name, "Dom Silva."

III

WHEN I reached the deck later in the day I found the weather changed. The *Dancing Sue* was heeled over with the thresh of a following sou'easter. Away off to windward an East Indiaman staggered lurchingly along with close reefs in everything she showed, but the *Dancing Sue* had shaken her tops'ls free of the gaskets I had put about them and was footing it like a witch.

A passing squall brought a downpour of rain that snapped across the surface of the sea like a whiplash. It left behind it a broad, beaten wake which lasted until the combers rose, white-headed, and stamped it out again.

"Going to hold this gait as long as the Lord'll let us," said Billings when I relieved him. "As long as the lord'll let us. Old Man's orders. He says we'll get to Zanzibar in two weeks or bust—two weeks or bust."

"He's like to bust then," I replied, and took over the deck.

There was little to do, except to see that the ship was kept on her course, that the donkeys weren't drowned there in their stalls by the flying sheets of wind-driven spray and that the dusky crew was kept on the alert to leap into the shrouds at the first word of alarm that a real squall was coming.

The days that followed proved one long fight for speed. How we did nurse that *Dancing Sue*, coaxing every foot of gain out of her. It wasn't always pleasant out on deck, for the weather, which had been so delightful after we rounded Cape Agulhas, was growing hotter and stickier day by day.

The northeast monsoon had definitely set in, and any one who has ever sailed the southern Indian Ocean knows what that means in the way of discomfort.

Rain fell by day and by night. Racing squalls of it whizzed dizzily across the sea and vanished to leeward. Sometimes the rain was mere liquid sunshine. At other times it poured down on our decks and wind-bulged canvas with an angry, drumming drone that deafened.

Five days after our cabin talk Captain Yankton announced that the next day would see us abreast of Cape St. Mary, southernmost tip of Madagascar.

He was right. Shortly after noon the lookout sighted a purplish patch of cloud off our starboard bow—the highland back of the cape. We were in the mouth of the Mozambique Channel.

In spite of my years at sea I confessed to a little thrill. Barring our own Spanish Main, no other portion of all the seven seas has romance plastered so thickly all over it as has that reef-infested, current-tormented stretch of narrow waters that was then tossing and heaving right ahead of the *Dancing Sue's* jumping forefoot.

It was here that Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese, fought and wrested a kingdom for his master. Indeed, if all be true that's told in forecastle and cabin, it was here in

Digitized by Google

these same waters that Solomon's ships sailed when he sent them forth to fetch gold for his first Jewish temple. Surely it was that hereabouts the Arab fighting *dhows* had come, bringing refugees from the tyranny of the Mohammedan religion. Phœnician galleys and Roman triremes had plowed these waters just ahead.

I left the poop where I had been standing when the lookout called, walked forward to the eyes of the ship and sat down on a bitt.

A gush of air from the fore topmast staysail poured down moist and slightly chill on my bare head, and the leaping bowsprit seemed to me to be leaning out eagerly for what was ahead of us. I loved the *Dancing Sue!*

"She wants to get there as much as we do," said the captain, breaking in on my thoughts. "Feel her strain?"

"She's doing her ——est," I agreed, and turned again to look into the mist-enshrouded horizon.

That night Captain Yankton remained on deck, conning the ship himself by some sixth sense he had. Since then I have been told they've buoyed the channel in places and built lights in others, but in those days there was nothing to aid the navigator. One took one's soul in one's hands and left the rest to God when one ran by night through the Mozambique Channel.

As for us, it was tack, reach, beat, tack, reach, beat the livelong night, with the captain issuing his quick staccato orders, the men jumping and the wind howling in the rigging. And through the night, from time to time, would come the protesting bray of a cold, wet and disconsolate donkey.

The next day we edged over to the East African coast and began to sight Arab *dhows*. A sidewheel British cruiser signaled us that she was the *Daphne*. We left her behind, her trail of horrid smoke smudging the blue of the sky, for at that moment it was clear.

Three days later, after a wonderful run, we rounded the Point and entered the crowded roadstead of Zanzibar. All around us, as we forged ahead to our anchorage, lay Arab slave *dhows*, some of them filled with their human cargo stolen from the hinterland of Africa, the loom of which, twenty-six miles across the Channel, we could just make out in the glittering sunshine of the morning.

We dropped anchor in seven fathoms, and I gazed, half-hypnotized, at the spade-shaped peninsula upon which stood the cluster of flat-topped houses that was Zanzibar, capital city of Zanzibar Island, chief slave-market and wickedest spot on the face of the globe.

Sayyid Said of Muscat was then Sultan of Zanzibar. From where I stood on the *Dancing Sue* I could see his palace and the towering minarets of a number of mosques.

"Call away my boat, Dabney," the captain ordered as soon as the mudhook was down. "I want you to go ashore with me."

By the time we had dressed in our shore-going duds and climbed over the side into the waiting boat, which was in charge of Wilkes, the sun was hidden by heavy clouds and the rain was pelting down as if not a drop had fallen for months and it had to make up for lost time. Drenched to the skin, we landed near Ndia Kun, the main road of the city, and walked along toward the great slave-market, the stench of which I could smell long before we reached the place itself.

Dignified-looking Arabs stalked through the dirty street, unmindful of the rain that was bombarding the heaps of refuse with torrents of water. Half-naked Swahilis, half-castes of all kinds, Portuguese in dirty white, Genoese in dirtier white and less of it and negroes with the mark of the slave-yoke still fresh about their naked shoulders, splashed unconcernedly through the rain. I didn't mind it much myself.

We were bound for the American consulate, established a few years before.

The consulate was housed in what had once been a private residence, built, like all the other houses in that part of town, of white stone, washed clean by the driving rain, its heavy carved black door standing out in vivid relief. We were met at this door by the consul himself, shabby but clean and very glad to see us.

As soon as we had penetrated into the private office of the consul, Captain Yankton made known the purpose of our visit.

"Can you tell me where Dom Silva is now?" he asked.

At the question the consul's pleasant face shaded.

"Wait," said Yankton, catching the look. "I want to find out for a good reason—a decent reason."

"Can there be a decent reason for wishing to see that half-breed brute?" asked the

Digitized by Google

consul. "I've tried and tried to have the Government send a warship out here to aid the British in running him down, but the Navy Department won't hear to it. Costs too much, I suppose. The brute's a scourge. He's taken to piracy now as well as slave-trading."

"Just the same I want to see him," pursued Yankton. "He has a man in slavery I want to rescue—steal, capture, buy, if necessary. Where is he now?"

"He's just been given control of the slave barracoons on Timbatu Island," the consul replied. "But you'd better keep away from him. He's dangerous."

"Timbatu?" asked the captain, passing over the consul's advice. "That's the little island six miles or thereabouts from the Point?"

"Yes," said the consul, and then, as his little daughter came in to announce other visitors, we left him.

Out in the street once more, Captain Yankton appeared to be in deep thought, and, notwithstanding the rain, which now was coming down in sheets, walked slowly back in the direction of the slave-market.

This time, instead of going around it, we walked through the slave-market—a great square, open to the rain and sun, with Arab stalls in which the slaves were held by their owners for sale. At the far end of the square we came to a side street, which we turned down and presently found ourselves at the Malagash Lagoon. This old lagoon has since been drained. Even then engineers were at work upon it, but it still divided the city into two quarters which could be reached, one from the other, only by boats. It was a filthy-smelling sheet of water—but at that time all Zanzibar smelled to high heaven, spiritually as well as physically.

"You would not think to look at it from the inside, and to smell it from any side, that this place was the center of trade for the whole East African coast," said Yankton as we waited for a boatman. "It is, though. The Arabs have a saying that 'when one plays a flute in Zanzibar all Africa to the lakes dances.' "

LOATHSOME as it was, the town and everything about it fascinated me. The rain had held up for a few minutes and the sun, never very far from his job, was shining again so that the very earth seemed to steam. Along the shore of the lagoon paraded an endless procession of men, women and children—Arabs, Portuguese, French, British and half-castes of all kinds, in every stage of life. Verily, it seemed to me that, in the language of the Book of Common Prayer, here had assembled "all sorts and conditions of men," and they all needed to be prayed for.

We crossed the lagoon in a funny little boat turned up sharply at both ends, leaving barely room enough in the bottom for the two of us, with the boatman. Yankton did not dismiss the boat at the opposite side, but left me with it.

"I shall not be long," he said. "I may get what I want in here."

With that he walked quickly away toward a large white stone house, set back in its own green grounds behind red acacias and coco-palms.

I watched him make his way to the door, which was opened to him by an enormously fat negress, whose upper lip protruded, it seemed to me, two or three inches. I wanted to see this negress more closely, but the door closed and shut her and the captain from my sight.

However, just at that moment there came walking down the side of the lagoon another negress, slimmer and younger than the one I had seen at the door, and her upper lip, too, was elongated in an alarming manner. I was close enough to her to see that she was wearing in her lip a thick peg of ebony, inlaid with tin. I was to see lots of these ornaments later, and to learn that they were called *pelele*, and that girls who had none were considered most unfortunate, since the men of their tribe do not want them for wives. A plug in the outside wall of the left nostril, called a *chipini*, was an additional lure for the male of the species. A woman wearing both the *pelele* and the *chipini* was well nigh irresistible.

Captain Yankton was not gone long. Presently he came out of the house, hurried down the walk, seized my arm and rushed me back to the boat.

"We'll get back to the Shangani quarter," he whispered. "Ibn Said has told me where to go."

He did not seem to want to say anything else, and we recrossed the lagoon in silence. A few minutes later we were twisting and winding our way through filthy, crooked streets, past the slave barracoons, past the

Digitized by Google

slave-market, past rows of Arab shops, from which came always a medley of voices in Babylonic tongues, until we came to a quieter part of the city.

"Here we are," said Yankton as we came to a gate in a high wall.

He knocked on the gate, and it was finally opened by a tall, black African in the dress of a lay brother of some Catholic missionary order. A low stone building that seemed to ramble on indefinitely, with innumerable annexes, each surmounted by a cross, lay before us.

What seemed to be the main door of the building opened at once to our knock, and another tall black lay brother conducted us through a long, dark corridor to a small, cheerless, stone-floored room, where we waited for some time.

Finally a man in the flowing garb of a monk came in. Yankton spoke to him rapidly in some native dialect, which I found out afterward was Swahili. They talked for some time, then Yankton said good-by in English, took me once more by the arm, and we went back to the street. I could see by his face that he was disappointed.

"What is it?" I asked. "What have you found out?"

"Very little, worse luck," he replied moodily. "I went to Ibn Said first, for it was through him that I heard last of Mum Tumbo. He could tell me only that the black had escaped from Dom Silva. He was believed to have swum from Pemba Island to Zanzibar, so Ibn Said told me, though that is next to impossible, certainly most improbable, good swimmer though Mum Tumbo is. At any rate, Ibn Said believed that the monks in Zanzibar had given shelter to the runaway, though they hardly ever do that, slavery being strictly legal here.

"That was why I went to the Mission. The priest in charge told me they had no knowledge of any such man as Mum Tumbo. There's nothing for it, I suppose, but to go back to the ship and wait.

We did. For three miserable days we did nothing else. The Arab officials began to get suspicious, since we neither took on nor put off cargo or supplies, and still we waited.

Late in the evening of the third day, as I stood sheltered from the rain by the awning we had rigged on the poop, watching the twinkling harbor lights and listening to the eery screams and cries from the near-by town, which seemed never to sleep, a negro slipped up out of a shore boat and tumbled over the bulwarks, gasping out two words that almost took my breath away.

"Mum Tumbo!" he muttered, and slid away in the gloom.

IV

BEFORE I could recover from my shock of surprize there came a hail from overside.

"Ship ahoy!"

I turned to the bulwarks and answered.

Immediately another boat bumped against the side of the *Dancing Sue*, and a man leaped over our bulwarks and landed on our deck with a resounding thump. In the light of the poop-lantern I could see that he was dressed in white and that he wore a tiny, pointed beard, black as ink, and a pair of pointed mustachios.

Advancing to the break of the poop I asked him in English what he wanted. He replied in the abominable *lingua franca* of the East Coast, a medley of Portuguese, French, Arabian and a jumble of half a dozen native dialects. Failing to understand him, I repeated my question.

This time he replied in fairly good English.

"The captain—Captain Yankton."

I wondered, as I told him I would call the captain, why he had not spoken English at first. I found out later that it was because of his hatred of the English.

Leaving him standing at the head of the poop-ladder, I walked to the skylight and called through it to the first mate, who was sitting at the cuddy-table reading Robinson Crusoe, his sole recreation except the Bible—which he did not look upon as recreation, but as duty.

"Gentleman here to see the captain," I announced, and was slightly surprized to see him raise one pudgy hand in warning and point to the cabin door.

That opened as Billings pointed, and I caught a glimpse of a naked black back which I sensed belonged to Mum Tumbo. Then the door shut again, leaving Captain Yankton on the outside, alone.

He waved to me, and I turned to walk back to our visitor—and collided with the man himself. He had crept up behind me and was peering into the cuddy.

Digitized by Google

He backed away with a mumbled clatter of words, which I took to be an apology, and we stood staring at each other in the lantern light as Yankton mounted the ladder and came upon us. I saw him stiffen as his eyes fell on the visitor.

"Dom Silva!" he ejaculated. "Well, what do you want?"

"My property," snarled the other.

"If you mean Mum Tumbo," said the captain, going straight to the point. "You will have to look elsewhere. He is not here."

"You lie!" exploded the half-caste, with an impulsive stride toward the captain.

Yankton stood his ground, although it was clear that Dom Silva, unlike most half-castes of Arab blood, was no coward.

"No," said the white man imperturbably. "Mum Tumbo is not here."

"I saw him in your cabin just a moment ago," insisted Dom Silva, angrily.

"Yes?" said the captain. "Perhaps you did. He was there a little while ago, but he has gone. You can see for yourself if you like. I know better than to keep a runaway slave in this port—especially one that has fled from Dom Silva. He went through the stern window as I came out of the cabin."

"Ah!" Dom Silva twirled about and started for the bulwarks, apparently to call his boat's crew, and as suddenly twirled back.

"You are lying, Captain Yankton," he said. "Give me my slave."

My captain coldly eyed the half-caste.

"Twice, Dom Silva, you have called me a liar," he said slowly and distinctly. "You have dared this because you are sure that I am not armed, and you know that I would not touch, with my bare hands, a yellow half-caste dog like you."

I could have laughed aloud at the bewildered amazement and fury that contorted the breed's face before he flung himself, with a sort of howl, straight at Yankton's throat.

The captain was ready for this. His long, sinewy arms closed about the lithe form of the half-caste like the coils of a rock python. The pair tottered and fell to the deck with a crash.

Eager to lend a hand, I rushed up, but a warning from Yankton stopped me.

And just in time. Whether Dom Silva's men had seen the start of the fight I do not know, but as I wheeled back from the struggling pair under the poop's lantern half a dozen muscular blacks swarmed over the bulwarks and came rushing up the ladder toward me.

I met the first of the rush with a straight arm thrust I'd learned from a former mate. It never failed to do the trick, and the man that got it then went head over heels backward down the ladder, sweeping two of his fellows down with him. I shouted and turned to meet a fourth, who sprang at me from the side. We closed. I felt the negro grip my right shoulder with his teeth as he nuzzled his head deep against me in an effort to reach my throat.

With a burst of shouting our Kroo boys came running to our aid. I was swept off my feet and rolled under the hatch coaming. When I staggered up again the deck was clear except for the captain and Dom Silva.

These two were still fighting desperately, rolling over, hammering at each other, as one or the other gained the upper hand.

As I looked, Dom Silva rolled uppermost, poised himself and flashed a knife. Before he could strike I leaped, striking him full between the shoulders and gathering him under me as I swept him clear of the captain's body.

Somehow I managed to get a grip on his right wrist, and what I gripped in those days I held on to. Slowly I bent his arm upward and back. I heard a snap, and the knife rattled on the deck.

The form under me stiffened with pain, but no sound came from it. I climbed to my feet, dragging him up with me. Without waiting to see where he would fall, I swung him into the air and pitched him over the side.

There was a splash, a yell, and, leaning over the bulwarks, I saw Dom Silva being pulled into his boat.

Before I straightened up I heard the shrill whistle of Wilkes' pipe and the boatswain's hoarse, bawling orders. Then came the captain's command to cut the cable, and we began to drift with the sluggish tide, past the dimly lighted *dhows*, *bateeles*, *badanes* and shore-boats, toward the open sea.

"Mum Tumbo?" I said to Yankton as he passed me.

"Safe back on board," he answered with a grin. "I told the truth. He did go out of the stern windows—into the dinghy. Stayed in the dinghy till we got under way.

Digitized by Google

He's just come back the same way he went out."

Sail after sail was sheeted home, and the *Dancing Sue* began to gather way. From behind us there came the sound of fierce shouting. Darting lights low down on the water front appeared on shore. From an old battery near the Point a lantern flashed, and a tumult of voices echoed across the black water.

We drew nearer. The *Dancing Sue*, beginning to feel the weight of the monsoon, throbbed with exultation.

I could have shouted aloud with excitement. This was the real thing. This was worth a dozen other voyages. And now, to cap the climax, came from a near-by *dhow* the command to anchor. The skipper heard it and laughed. I laughed with him.

Billings, whom I had not seen since the fight started, came on deck, white and frightened, and whispered into Captain Yankton's ear.

"Can't be done, Elias," I heard Yankton reply. And then, soothingly: "We'll be out of this in a minute. Better get below."

To my amazement, the mate turned and tottered for the poop-ladder, and disappeared.

"That's why I had to get you," said Yankton to me. "Had to have a fighting man with me."

His voice was grave, almost sorrowful—the voice of a man speaking of some friend afflicted with a frightful disease. I understood and was silent. Out of the darkness behind us, intensified now by a lashing squall of rain, came another command to anchor.

The captain's answer was to send the crew aloft to set the topsails. In a few noments the *Dancing Sue* felt their pull and leaned out like a racer on the home stretch.

From the battery on the Point there was a shout and with it the dull boom of a gun. An old-fashioned round shot, such as must have been used in the battle of Aboukir Bay, whistled between the main and mizzen, tearing a neat round hole in the staysail. Again and once more the old gun thundered, and I heard a splintering crash aloft and sprang into the main shrouds. The last shot had torn a jagged splinter from the foot of the main topmast.

When I reached the deck again with my report the captain was gazing ahead through the murk. Dancing in from the channel were many lights—*dhows*. And now, from one of the round towers near the Palace of the Sultan, shot up a tongue of flame.

"The warning beacon!" exclaimed Yankton. "I wonder what that signal is for."

One by one the lights ahead, the only thing between us and the Indian Ocean, shifted their helms and bore down upon us. Puzzled, I spoke to the captain, to find him as puzzled as I. Then, from out of the gloom—we had doused the poop-lantern and every other light on the ship save the tiny flicker at the binnacle—came the quiet, assured voice of a stranger.

"They are the fighting *dhows* of Dom Silva. They were expected tonight."

I started. The voice was new to me. Who could have come on the ship?

"Thank you, Mum Tumbo," said Yankton.

Behind us came two *dhows*, their crews aiding their progress with long sweeps. We could see them moving against the lights ashore, dodging in and out of the gleaming paths that twinkled from battery and signal-tower.

Bearing down upon us in front, much nearer now, were the fighting *dhows*. Evidently, we were as clearly marked for them against the shore lights as the following *dhows* were for us. As the captain edged away toward the Point they followed his every movement. He appeared to realize we could not escape them in that way, for he put his helm over, bringing the wind abeam, and, bracing the yards, steered straight down Zanzibar Channel.

That maneuver brought one of the fighting *dhows* directly into our path. As we bore down upon her some one on her deck shouted a command and a spatter of shots sounded from forward of her ugly lanteen sails. The bullets and slugs came whistling about us—the captain, Mum Tumbo and me—standing there on the poop of the *Dancing Sue*.

On we went. The *Dancing Sue* raised her forefoot with the sweep of an oncoming comber. From the *dhow*, which had surely expected us to sheer off before we came so close, there arose a storm of yells and screams.

We were upon her. There was a grinding, splintering smash, and she swept past us, a shattered wreck.

The *Dancing Sue*, her path cleared, scuttled out to the open water.

Digitized by Google

V

ONCE outside, meeting the chop of the open channel, the captain brought the ship around and headed southward again. The sweep of the northeast monsoon caught us on the port quarter, and with the black loom of the African coast to starboard, and the island of Zanzibar close on our port side we went booming along.

Immediately ahead of us were a score of dangers. The channel between the island and the mainland was fairly littered with shoals, reefs and rocks, all swept by a treacherous current, for the tail-end of the Agulhas flow and the southwesterly drift of the Malabar stream mingled thereabouts, giving rise to a thousand eddies and cross-currents.

But Yankton, who seemed to know the channel as well as he knew the route to his own cabin, conned the *Dancing Sue* safely over the bar and, hugging the coast of the island, kept us on our southerly course.

I walked aft to the binnacle and stood gazing astern along our wake and thinking of the strange events of the last two hours, when my mind swung round to the negro who had tumbled over the rail. I had had my hands on this man, had seen his big black back and shoulders, had heard his resonant, rumbling voice, but I had not come face to face with him. What kind of looking man was he?

I shook my head, angry with myself for letting my mind dwell upon a negro.

"Peace, *bwana*," said a voice in the gloom behind me. "Do not think of me if it gives you annoyance."

I swirled about to find Mum Tumbo within a few feet of me. Had I spoken my thoughts aloud? To this day I could swear that I had been silent. The man had somehow read my thought and made reply.

"Better, still," he rumbled on, "think not at all. What are thoughts? They come and they go through the heads of men, like gulls seeking food in the harbor of Unguja."

He used the Swahili word for Zanzibar, but his English was well-nigh perfect.

"Peace, *bwana*," he said again. "Peace, man with the face of the Yellow God!"

And with that he glided away, the glow of the lamps in the cuddy seeping up through the skylight and gleaming on his naked skin. I was still tongue-tied when Yankton came tramping back from his meal and broke the spell.

I told him what Mum Tumbo had said.

"Now I wonder what the devil he meant by that last," said Captain Yankton. "He's a queer character, is that same Tumbo—stranger than any man, white, black, brown or red, I ever met. But I believe in him. This whole expedition's based on his unproved word, which shows what he can do to a hard-headed Yankee."

We passed Ras Kisimkasi about three bells, and felt the *Dancing Sue* lift to the in-rolling swells of the Indian Ocean. Zanzibar was left behind.

Night vanished, and up shot the sun. Behind us, not more than two or three miles, was a group of large *dhows*, the sun glistening upon their great brown lanteen sails.

Mum Tumbo arose from the lea of the skylight hatch where he had been squatting for I don't know how long and stared intently across the tossing sea that separated us from these *dhows*.

"Dom Silva," he said. "He is after us, keeping on our spoor as the lion keeps to the spoor of the wounded antelope."

He swung around and faced me, and in the clear light of the early morning I got my first look at his face.

It was a face to remember. Semitic in outline, with beaked nose and a forehead lofty for one of his race, it was the face of a man who might have lived a thousand years—a face curiously calm, passionless, impersonal, detached, and the skin seamed and crinkled with a thousand wrinkles.

He was tall and gave an impression of tremendous strength. Save for a *moucha* made of the skin of an ox and tanned with the hair on, he was stark naked.

"Listen, white men," he said, addressing both me and Captain Yankton. "This Dom Silva seized me in the village where I waited for the return of Captain Yankton. Twice I escaped; twice he caught me. The second time one of his men I killed. The others took and bound me. At Pemba Island in the barracoon he kept me, beating me daily to make me speak, for he had learned something of my secret—our secret. Seventeen days ago I learned that the *Dancing Sue* had left Cape Town."

"What!" exclaimed Yankton. "Seventeen days ago? That was the day after we left Cape Town."

Digitized by Google

"True," said Mum Tumbo. "Nevertheless, that day I learned of your being on the way, learned it as I have means of learning things. Again I ran away from Pemba. I stole a boat and paddled to Unguja. There I hid me in the home of the good mission fathers."

"But they told me they knew nothing of you," said Captain Yankton.

"They had been instructed to so speak. Your visit was reported to me, but I could not move then for Dom Silva watched the house day and night. At last—last night—my moment came. I reached the wharves where the boats are tied up. On my heels came the men of Dom Silva, and Dom Silva himself. You know the rest.

"Now heed! Never will Dom Silva forsake the chase. He has smelled gold. He will follow until death takes him, or you, or all of us."

The speaker turned away from us and squatted down under the hatch once more. Captain Yankton looked at me, but said nothing. Still without a word, he walked to the fore shrouds and began mounting to the foretop. Presently he came down, his face grave.

"We may have to fight for it," he said. "I dare not press the *Sue* in these waters."

"Well, sir," I said, "let's fight, then."

"Ah," said Mum Tumbo, turning his cavernous eyes on me. "The man with the face of the Yellow God would fight. That is good. Fighting is always good."

Yankton grinned.

"I'm out-numbered, I see. All right. We'll fight if we have to, but not otherwise."

Then began a rush of preparation. I took charge of the deck while Captain Yankton saw to the bringing-up of a quantity of arms of various sorts, including a number of muskets which he loaded and dealt out to the black boys forward, who could handle them. When this was finished I asked to be relieved for a time and went below to make ready a little surprize of my own.

When I came back I carried, slung over my shoulders, four large tin kettles, big enough to hold a couple of quarts of water each. I put some of the men to work preparing grappling-irons and went and explained my scheme to Captain Yankton.

He listened with amazement, and grinned delightedly when I had finished.

"We won't use the grapples unless we have to," I said.

"Oh, sure, sure!" he exclaimed, agreeing with everything. "Gad, but it's a good thing I met you there in Cape Town."

Taking my kettles I mounted to the main top. Two of the vessels I left in the top and crawled out along the footrope of the yardarm. There, with a few lengths of spun yarn, I fastened the other kettles where they could be come at easily. Then I went to the deck once more and announced that I was ready.

Yankton was studying a stretch of green water ahead, marking the presence of a shoal. Then he turned and looked at the *dhows*. They had crept up until they were now less than a half-mile away. On the towering poop of the nearest I could see a white figure, and, with the glasses, I could almost make sure it was Dom Silva.

And while I was watching, Captain Yankton's hand went up. Over spun the wheel, and round came the *Dancing Sue* as her yards were braced. Soon she straightened out on her new course, headed off at right angles to her old one. This threw the *dhows*, straggling along behind us, on our starboard beam. In a few moments they were almost abreast. We could see the swarms of Arabs and negroes that were their crews, rushing about like frightened blackbirds, hauling the huge lanteen sails over to meet the change in our course.

As they were swinging about to follow, Yankton swerved once more, bringing the leading *dhow* not more than two hundred yards away, and close abeam. Before she could get out of our way we were rushing toward her.

I raced aloft and scuttled out to the yardarm. In my teeth, as I climbed, I carried a slow match, smoldering and sputtering sparks as it burned.

Hardly was I in place when the *Dancing Sue* ground alongside the *dhow*. From my perch on the yard-arm I could look down on the glaring dusky faces and scores of fierce eyes below me. Then I touched the match to a fuse sticking out of my kettle spouts, jerked the kettles from the spun yarn gaskets and tossed them, all sputtering, into the deck of the *dhow*, just forward of the break of the poop. Next moment we had forged on past the *dhow*.

And as we did so the *Dancing Sue* trembled and shook under the force of a tremendous blast.

My kettle bombs had exploded. Fragments

Digitized by Google

of the shattered poop and deck of the Arab vessel hurtled past us. Her great lanteen sails were down with a crashing run. Spinning round on our heel, we fled once more for the open sea.

"Was that Dom Silva's ship?" I asked as I climbed down to the deck. "I did not see him on the poop."

"No," said the Captain. "I'm afraid I picked the wrong *dhow*. But better luck next time. Where did you learn that trick?"

"In the Navy," I said. "But it won't be so easy to play next time. I'm sorry we missed Dom Silva."

After that we left the *dhows*, the three uninjured ones hanging about their shattered companion, and raced merrily down toward the Mozambique.

VI

ALL that day, with the kick of the sea to aid us, we raced south, everything set that would draw. We kept well out to sea until the following morning and then, satisfied that Dom Silva had been thrown off the track, wore the *Dancing Sue* around and headed for the African coast.

This brought the wind forward the beam, the *Dancing Sue's* best point of sailing, as I think I've said before, and she romped along in great form. The morning of the third day after leaving Zanzibar two large Arab *dhows* passed us, apparently bound for the slave markets of Madagascar, with large cargoes of "black ivory." They were so close to us that the reek of the slaves 'tween decks came down to us.

This meeting seemed to disturb Yankton.

"I'm sorry they saw us," he said when I questioned him. "I'd rather the whole East Coast thought the *Dancing Sue* was off for Cape Town."

After we left the *dhows* hull-down Billings came out from his cabin and took his turn as watch officer. His round face was still pasty white. His place had been filled while he was off by Wilkes, which old sea-dog had a profound contempt for the first mate and had taken a great shine to me.

Mum Tumbo stalked about the deck for hours a day, saying little, eating his meals apart from everybody else on shipboard and looking always like a revivified mummy, endowed with almost superhuman strength and wisdom.

The day after we passed the *dhows*, we sighted a tall headland shortly after seven bells in the morning. Two hours later we rounded a cape to find ourselves in a beautiful bay, shaped like a bow on its northwestern side, which was about nine miles long and sloped sharply upward in deeply green hills.

At the southern end of the bow, where the blue of the bay turned to a yellowish green, we could see what appeared to be the mouth of a large river.

"That's our river," said Captain Yankton, who had been talking to Mum Tumbo, and we headed for the green water.

After we had worked the ship into it, passing two or three native villages and one sizable town, apparently built and later abandoned by the Portuguese, we found that the river wasn't much of a stream, after all, though now, at the flood season, sufficient for our purpose.

And now began the real work of the trip. When the *Dancing Sue* had made her way a few miles up the river above the little Portuguese town, Captain Yankton ordered the boats dropped. We piled into them and towed the little old ship against the current of the river, deeper and deeper into the bush. We spent three laborious days at this task, the black boys sweating and the white men marveling how any one could live in such a moist, sticky, pestilential hole.

Here and there the wall of verdure that lined the river banks was broken by tiny clearings in which an occasional Yao hut could be seen, but for the most part we seemed to be shut in by the jungle.

Late in the afternoon of the third day on the river we towed the bow of the *Dancing Sue* around an elbow and found ourselves in a broad, silent lagoon. It was here that I saw, in his own habitat, my first hippopotamus. We had rounded the point of land round which the river swept out of the lower end of the lagoon. I stood up in the stern sheets of the boat I'd been steering to see what I could see. As I did so, the Kroo boys gave a stroke with their oars, and the tow-line straightened with a jerk, which threw me over to one gunwale. This I clutched to save myself from going overboard. Right under my nose rose this hippo, his mouth open, and so close I could feel his breath on my face.

He did not seem any more anxious for a closer acquaintance with me than I did

Digitized by Google

with him, for he forged away from us in a hurry. But he had given me an idea about what to expect in Africa's sluggish inland waters.

We made rafts of timbers cut from the river-banks and unloaded the donkeys on them and got them ashore, stripped the tarpaulin off the great pile of supplies heaped between the main and foremast of the *Dancing Sue* and ferried it all ashore, taking three days in all for the job. The boys, driven by Yankton and myself, worked hard. Indeed, I had never seen negroes work better.

When we had everything on the shore and piled on rudely constructed platforms to keep it out of the wet—for the ground was sodden—there came the task of getting the *Dancing Sue* ready for her long stay in the lagoon.

We did not attempt to careen the boat. We could not leave enough men for that work. Captain Yankton had decided before we made a landing that Billings and Jenkins would have to be content with three or four boys and the steward, Rastus. Our own party was to consist of the fourteen Kroo boys left of the crew, fifty-two picked men Yankton had brought with us—each one of whom had been carefully selected for his strength, cheerfulness and obedience—Mum Tumbo, Wilkes, Captain Yankton and myself. This left the first mate and Jenkins just enough men to take care of the boat and to make shore trips in search of game and other food to help out the stock of supplies.

The order of march for us who were leaving the ship was mapped out in advance. Mum Tumbo, with a giant of a Somali negro named Simba and two of the best of the Kaffirs, should lead. Behind Mum Tumbo I was to march with eight of the Kroo boys, and behind me were to come the donkeys in the care of the other Kroomen and some of the Kaffirs. Yankton and a special guard would bring up the rear behind the remainder of the party.

A few minor changes were made in this arrangement as time went by, but for the most part and in general that was the plan of march throughout the entire trip to Twanda, Sacred City of the Yellow God.

The night before we left we spent ashore, accompanied by Billings, in a *bomba*—a camp enclosed with a fence of thorn bushes we had cut for the purpose.

I slept but little. To begin with, the mosquitoes that swarmed everywhere, even inside my net, would have kept me awake if nothing else had. I grew more or less accustomed to them later on, but that night they were maddening. Besides, there were plenty of other things to make me restless, such as the splash and grunting of a hippopotamus, startled, perhaps, by the *Dancing Sue* and her boats, and the steady drumming drone of myriads and myriads of insects outside our mosquito nets. When this stopped, as it did once or twice, my ears fairly ached with the pressure of the contrasting silence.

But more disturbing than any of these things were the heart-shaking roars that from time to time told of the presence of his majesty, Simba, the Lion. It's a hateful thing, until you get used to it, to lie in a tiny tent behind a frail wall of sticks and brush and listen to the king of beasts just outside, rocking the very earth with his thunder.

I was wide awake and ready to get up long before the dense gloom of the night under the trees began to pale and turn gray. When there was just that vague hint of dawn in the air I crawled from under the mosquito netting that covered my camp cot, lifted the flap of the little tent Yankton and I shared together and looked out on the graying world.

Billings was up before me. I found him outside the bomba, crouching over a fire he had made.

"Hello!" I said, surprized to see him. "Aren't you afraid a lion'll get you out here all by your lonesome."

"They won't come so close to the fire," he answered simply. "That's why I built this one. The one inside the camp had burnt low, and I didn't like to disturb any o' the rest of you, so I came out here and built this fire. Been here nearly all night, nearly all night."

He said it without any shame, as if to be afraid were a thing no man need be ashamed of. Poor little old fat, scared Billings!

"Why didn't you go back to the ship?"

"Oh, I'll have enough of the ship after you and the captain have gone," he said, kicking up his fire.

In the light of the flame his face looked white, and I saw that his hands shook.

Poor little old fat, round Billings! I can see him now as he watched us go that morning.

Digitized by Google

Then I felt only a sort of kindly contempt for him. Now, I wonder at the will of the man that overcame his physical fears, and made him, for the sake of—well, duty, I think it was, avarice, if you will—stick to the post assigned him there in the wilderness, alone with one other white man and a handful of negroes. When all is said and done I think you'll agree with me that he had the harder part—the part of waiting and watching. We had, at least, the spur of action to keep us nerved up for whatever might be in store.

But little if any of this had any part in my thoughts that morning. I left Billings, still hugging his fire, and walked down to the river's edge, where I stood watching the swirling water above the lagoon.

There the sun caught me. It swept up the river and over the lagoon, flooding the yellow water with fire and turning the *Dancing Sue*, riding at anchor, into a ship of rose petals and making every tree and shrub and reed throb with a new life.

Came, finally, the moment to start—later than was to be our custom when we got into the swing of trekking.

The *barabara*, as the natives call a path through the bush, led up at first through reeds and shrubs, past a great, spreading baobab-tree, to the top of the sloping bluff, that, geological ages ago, probably had been the real bank of the river. Whether this *barabara* had been worn by the feet of men or animals I was not enough of a trekker to tell, nor did I care just then. I was too much excited in the prospect of what lay before me to grub in the dirt for signs.

But there were others who had better eyes than I. Mum Tumbo had not gone three hundred yards from the *bomba* when he swung off to one side and began to examine the ground. I halted my men, went up to him and asked him what he had found.

"Arabs," he said impassively. "There are the marks of their feet, and here—" he pointed to an indentation in the humid soil —"is where the spy rested the butt of his gun."

I looked as he directed, though the signs meant nothing to my untutored eye. But Yankton now come up, and he and Mum Tumbo followed the spoor back along the track to a place where even I could see that a boat had thrust her nose into the sand of the beach.

"Now, what the devil does that mean?" demanded the captain. "Are they spying on us? And is it Dom Silva?"

"Who knows?" said Mum Tumbo. "But there was but one man, and he has gone back, for his boat is gone. Shall we turn back now and take up the trail again?"

I caught a curious look in Yankton's eyes. Did he doubt the wisdom of continuing that march? It would have been heart-breaking to me to turn back then. I wanted to go on.

"Go on!" commanded the captain. "They'll have to march fast to keep up with us, when once we are really on our way."

And so we started our long march into the interior of the Dark Continent.

VII

I SOMETIMES wonder what the coming generations are going to do for mysteries. It seems to me they've all been solved since that far day when Yankton, Wilkes and I followed Mum Tumbo back to the top of the bluff, waved a final farewell to Billings and Jenkins, standing there by the *bomba*, and plunged into the African bush.

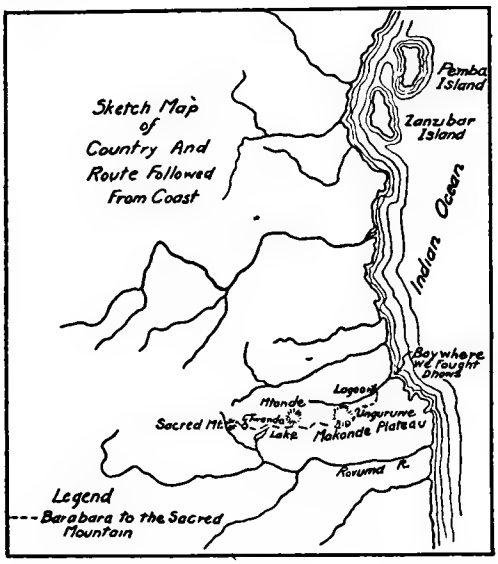
No longer is Africa the Dark Continent—the Land-Where-Anything-Might-Happen. Even as we made our march Livingston and others were probing its secrets. And now I sit by my fire and read old books telling of the doings of men like Stanley. And always I marvel at their exploits, knowing some little of the difficulties and dangers through which they had to pass to win to the goal of their desires even as we eventually won to ours.

Our immediate objective point was a high, cone-shaped mountain, standing lonely and aloof from the crest of the plateau up which we began to climb as soon as we had left the river-bottom.

Unguruwe, the mountain, was but a jutting buttress of this great tableland, the name of which is the Makonde Plateau. We had seen Unguruwe from the deck of the *Dancing Sue*, and its bald, red sandstone outline had come to hold for me a sort of fascination. From time to time during that first day of marching we caught sight of it, generally as we passed through some clearing made by the scattered groups of natives, who fled at our approach, leaving their homes abandoned, until they realized we were not Arab slave-traders.

Digitized by Google

From some of these natives we managed to obtain some manioc, already prepared for bread making, and some usampe for our men. We got as much of this provender as



we could, fearing that our supply of provisions would not last such a caravan as ours if we did not add to it whenever we could.

By the afternoon of the second day we found ourselves clambering up the foot-hills of Unguruwe.

And now Mum Tumbo turned southward, and, leaving the cone, we followed the backbone of the plateau for a whole week of travel. The bush was easier to travel through, there being many open spaces. This, however, had its drawbacks. In the absence of shade the intense light from the tropic sun for the four hours around midday was almost unbearable. It was even worse than the heat. I found it impossible to keep my eyes open for more than a second or two at a time.

Incidentally, the blacks did not seem to mind this glare. I wondered if it was because my eyes were not brown that I suffered so from the light. Wilkes, who was brown-eyed, seemed to get on much better. He said this was because he had only one eye, in which he considered himself fortunate. He got only half as much light.

Such trees as broke the open spaces were the various kinds of euphorbia. As we got higher up on the plateau we began seeing the *msolo*-tree, which Mum Tumbo called the soul-tree, where the spirits of the gods dwelt. Now and then, too, we'd pass a native graveyard with big *kamuna*-trees waving at the heads of the graves, and little circles of manioc flour under the trees where offerings or prayers of some sort had been made to the spirits supposed to flit at night through the branches.

And everywhere now there was the aromatic, all pervading smell of the *elelescho*. Even when we could not see this shrub, with its silvery gray leaves a-glitter in the sun or a-drip with the rain, we could smell it. Only Mum Tumbo called it the *elelescho*. Our Kaffir and Kroo boys had no name for it, and the natives of the plateau had for it, each tribe, a different name. But by whatever name it was called, it smelled always as sweet and as spicy.

By the end of the second week we had passed Mtandi Mountain and were descending from the plateau to a rolling grass-land, broken here and there by clumps of closely growing trees, and where the shallow valleys lay, with dense underbrush.

In places we could see for miles and miles over this tumbling country, making out herds of pallah, sassaby, springbok and on rocky places the solitary little steenbok. Several times we saw rhinoceroses, and once a great herd of elephants tramped through the tall grass not more than a half-mile to our right. It was a marvel of a country for wild life, a Noah's Ark turned loose in the jungle—birds and beasts and serpents, not only two by two but in flocks and herds and nests.

But, for the most part, the animals troubled us not at all. If we allowed the fire to go out at night in our *bombas*, leopards would yowl near by and lions creep up to the thorn walls and roar, which never failed to set our donkeys wild.

However, it was not the roaring lion, the trumpeting elephant or the lurking leopard that did for one of our donkeys. It was the ant. And it happened in broad daylight, under the glare of the African sun.

We had been marching in rather a straggling line, through comparatively open country. Mum Tumbo, as usual, was ahead and about a hundred yards to my right, for my party was temporarily out of alinement. Directly behind Mum Tumbo came the donkeys, with the greater number of the rest of the men.

Digitized by Google

Suddenly I heard a shout and looked up to see Mum Tumbo racing toward the men and the donkeys.

"Bear to the left!" he shouted, followed with a string of Swahili, in which I made out the word "*bashikouay*," repeated several times.

Back to the donkey train we rushed.

"Back!" shouted Mum Tumbo. "Back, keep back!"

And then I saw them. Ants—millions on millions of them, marching in reddish-brown ranks, which just at that moment swung into action with the precision of well-trained infantry. Before I could take my eyes away they had covered the first of the donkeys with a swarming, dusky red blanket from which it was impossible to free him.

Thanks to Mum Tumbo's warning, the blacks had got themselves and the other donkeys out of the danger zone. A short half-hour later we reassembled the caravan and passed the spot where the donkey had been attacked. Only his bones, picked bare, remained.

After a month on the road the character of the country altered again. Once more we began to climb, this time toward a range of mountains that loomed high against the sky-line. We were now high above sea-level, and the air was delicious. Acacias, sycamores, banyans, baobabs and occasionally the silk cotton-tree gave way, here and there, to groves of yellow pine.

In this beautiful country we camped one night beside a lake. Next morning as the sun came creeping up out of the forest behind us and touched the spire-like summit of a towering black mountain, Mum Tumbo pointed to it and said:

"The footstool of the Yellow God. Beneath it is the cavern where dwells the spirit, and in the village of Twanda, far down the mountainside, is the last of the golden gods."

I thrilled down to my toes. Captain Yankton came up.

"There it is!" I shouted excitedly. "Mum Tumbo let us sleep all night right in its shadow without saying a word."

Then I turned to Mum Tumbo, voicing the question that had been in my mind ever since I'd first heard of the gold of the Yellow Gods.

"Why is it?" I asked. "Why do you, a priest of the Yellow God, want us white men to take away that sacred gold from your people?"

"They are not my people, *bwana*," he said. "I come from a people far removed from this place. As for the reason that I would have you take the gold—it may be that I am a Christian. I lived for many years with missionaries and learned your English tongue. Would that not be reason sufficient for me to want to stamp out this idol worship?"

"For us, Tumbo," I answered.

He took me up quickly.

"But not for me, you would say," he said. "Perhaps it is then that I want a part of the yellow gold myself, to buy me freedom in a far country, and cattle and wives."

He smiled, a smile that twisted his lips but did not touch his eyes, and I knew that no question of mine would make him give up his secret.

The sun was dropping back of the Sacred Mountain when we breasted the incline and came to a spot where he had pointed out. A huge banyan tree, all smoky green in the afternoon light, marked a turn of the *barabara*. We rounded the banyan and stood where the land fell away in great, green rollers to a sort of circular, hemmed-in valley below.

And in that valley was Twanda, the Sacred City of the Yellow God. And it was on fire. Twanda was burning!

"The Arabs," said Mum Tumbo. "They have come again."

VIII

EVEN from where we stood we could see that the havoc wrought by the slavers must be great. The smoke, although still black and dense, was dying out over a wrecked and gutted village.

"The Arabs sweep clean," said Mum Tumbo, who was studying the situation with grave, immobile face.

Yankton, who had joined us, was visibly disturbed.

"How about the gold of the Yellow Gods, Tumbo?" he asked. "Do you think they have got to that?"

"It is in its secret hiding-place, held safe from profane fingers," the negro replied, cryptically. "And I, my father, if you think it wise, shall now venture down into

Digitized by Google

the valley by ways that may not yet be known to the Arabs and return with knowledge so that we may form a plan."

"It's a risk," objected Yankton. "A risk not only for you, Tumbo, but for us all. Without you to guide us this whole expedition will come to nothing, unless you care to tell us now how we can get to the gold."

A curious expression flitted over Mum Tumbo's usually sphinx-like face.

"It would be of no avail for you to find the gold without me, my father," he said. "But fear not. No harm will overtake me. I go."

And he did. Before further protest could be made by us his long, lithe form was swinging swiftly across the grass-covered, tree-shaded swales.

"And now what's to do?" I asked.

"The obvious thing," replied the captain. "Camp as near here as possible and wait for that blessed savage to come back to us."

Two hundred yards from the rock we found plenty of grass for the donkeys and thorn and brush for our camp wall. We did not know what might be hidden in those hills, so we made the walls particularly strong. We could not have much fire lest its smoke attract the Arabs.

Although we did not look for Mum Tumbo back before morning, Yankton and I took turns on watch through the night. I had the mid-watch, and when I went on duty at midnight, I found a gentle rain falling and the night black as a pocket.

Except for the soft patter of the rain and an occasional kick or squeal from the donkeys, the night was singularly quiet. Even the incessant drone of insects and the calling of night birds seemed hushed. For an hour I sat close to the tiny fire, keeping it alive by constant attention and listening for some sound that would tell me our guide had returned. At last I grew sleepy and longed for the warm dry blankets of the tent, so soon do we lose old habits and form new ones.

And then I sat up suddenly, conscious of a low murmur in my ear. It came closer and closer, but I could not make it out. Our men began waking up, and I could see by the fire's dim light that they were frightened. Suddenly our sentries we had posted out near the *barabara* came running in, led by Simba, who squatted down in front of me to say in broken English mixed with Swahili that an Arab slave caravan was passing two hundred yards away, in the dark. The noise we heard was the subdued moaning of the newly captured slaves.

Yankton, awakened by the stir, issued orders for absolute silence in the *bomba*. For half an hour we were so still that I could hardly believe more than half a hundred men, not to mention twenty-three donkeys, were close about me.

Morning came then, and with it the sun and warmth, but no Mum Tumbo. Leaving Wilkes in charge of the camp, Yankton and I crawled cautiously through the rank grass until we commanded a view of the *barabara* from behind the banyan tree on the crest. Not a soul was in sight in the valley below us, and off in the direction from which we had come the forest shut off our view.

"I'm worried about Mum Tumbo," muttered Yankton. "What if he ran full into that slaving party. We'd be in a fine mess, wouldn't we?"

I agreed. Still, although I understood how the captain felt, and I was as keen as ever on the adventure myself, I felt somehow more concerned about the safety of that strange black man than about the success of our hunt for gold.

By noon both Yankton and I were really anxious, and when three o'clock came with still no sign of Mum Tumbo we held a conference with Wilkes to determine what to do. While we were threshing about in a bog of uncertainty one of the sentries came running up, bringing with him a tiny, coal-black, stark-naked boy.

None of our men could understand a word the urchin spoke. After coming to realize this he suddenly jumped out of Simba's grasp, seized my hand, chattering in his funny lingo and pulling me along. I surrendered to him and he led me, followed by Yankton and Wilkes, to the *barabara*. There in the mud left by the rain of the night before was plainly marked the trail of the slaves and their Arab captors.

Pointing to these tracks, the boy jabbered excitedly and finally brought out the one word we could understand—

"Mum Tumbo!"

So that was it. While we were waiting and watching for him there in the *bomba* he was being dragged past us in the dark. Whether he had sent the boy to tell us we did not know just then nor care. The thing to do was to rescue Mum Tumbo.

Digitized by Google

But how were we to go about it? Yankton walked to the rock just back of the banyan, climbed its steep sides and looked out over the valley below. At last he slid down.

"Dabney," he called to me; "come here."

I stepped to his side.

"It's up to you and me," he began, without preliminary waste of words. "I think it would better be me."

"I don't know what you are talking about, sir," I said, "but if it's a case of risking a life, it'd far better be mine. You've got to think about the men here, and Billings and his men on the *Dancing Sue* —and all the rest of it. If I go—*puff!* That's all there is to it. What odds? Who'd miss me?"

"No girl, no mother—nobody at all?" he asked.

"Devil a body," I laughed. "What am I to do?"

"Do you think you could take Simba, trail that Arab caravan, find out something about them and get word to me by nightfall? We've lost time enough as it is, and it'll take a little time to make arrangements, but we'll be hard on your track."

"Very good, sir," I replied, glad at the prospect of immediate action. "I'll trail them with Simba. If I have to turn off the *barabara*, I'll leave either Simba or some sign for your men to follow. Are we going to fight the Arabs?"

"If we can catch them napping," said my captain.

Ten minutes later, in a pair of high hide boots that afforded protection against thorns, rocks, snakes and insects, I followed the half-naked Simba on the spoor of the Arab caravan. The time was shortly past four, which, in that latitude, gave us nearly two hours of light. I knew that slavers never traveled fast with their captives, fearing they might break down their human chattels, thus rendering them valueless, and I was confident that we should have little trouble in overtaking our men.

Indeed, we had traveled little more than a mile till we came to a spot where they must have stopped for breakfast. Simba nosed about like a big black dog and finally stood up with the information that there were about two hundred Arabs in the caravan with about five hundred yoked slaves.

"Him go slow like ——," he said, in his Zanzibar English.

"Good!" I answered. "Us go fast like the ——."

And we did. The long march up-country had hardened every muscle of my body, naturally strong, and my lungs had been firmed and built up until my wind was perfect; so, with Simba in the lead, we went forward at a long swift trot that fairly ate up the miles.

About six o'clock we came to a stretch of forest that lay between the foot of the hills and the head of the lake where we had camped the day before. In among the trees it grew rapidly dark, and, fearful that the Arabs might have stopped and camped for the night, with outposts stationed in the bush, we slowed down and proceeded more cautiously. In this manner we worked our way through the stretch of forest, with its thick undergrowth, and came out into the open a half-mile, or thereabouts, from the lake.

It was dark now, with no moon, but the stars were so bright I could plainly make out objects several feet away. Out there on the plain I felt more secure, being relieved of the feeling that a leopard would drop upon me from the limbs of a tree, a fear that I'd had, and kept to myself, all through the forest.

The wind, which had been at our back, now shifted, bringing to our ears the sound of wailing. Simba heard it first. Evidently the Arabs had selected the site of our old camp for their own.

More cautiously than ever we moved toward the sound of the wailing. Soon we could see the camp-fires and make out moving figures. As we drew nearer we saw that the Arabs had thrown up a big *bomba*, several score yards around and oval in shape, with one end open and resting on the lake shore, where the precipitous sides and deep water protected it from lions and other prowling beasts. The rest of the camp was fenced in by the usual wall of thorn bush.

The shore end of this *bomba* extended inland till it met the huge trunk of a great baobab-tree. This tree I remembered was fully twenty feet thick, and its great branches hung down to the ground, making not only part of the barricade for their *bomba* but also a good screen for me.

Leaving Simba on the old spoor, I crawled through the grass and dark till I came to the far side of this tree, then

Digitized by Google

swiftly climbed into the lower branches, trusting to the turmoil of wailing from the slaves to deaden any noise I might make. Soon I had reached a perch where I had a complete view of the inside of the *bomba*.

It was a very simple camp. Near the lake two small tents had been pitched—evidently the sleeping-quarters of the slave-trader and his lieutenants. The remaining Arabs appeared to have bedded themselves down near the fires, of which there were a half-dozen. A few sentries had been left on guard, and these paced slowly among the hordes of shackled and yoked blacks, striking out with long leather whips at any unusual movement on the part of the slaves. Somewhere among those captives was Tumbo.

I tried to count the Arabs, but failed. What did it matter? We'd have to fight the gang if the odds were fifty to one.

I looked again for Mum Tumbo. I felt perfectly sure he was there, but wherever he was he was effectually hidden by the gloom and the tangled mass of blacks. Finally I slipped to the ground and made my way back to Simba. Him I sent back to meet Captain Yankton, making him repeat his orders over and over again until I was satisfied the captain would know where I was and what I wanted him to do.

IX

HAVING set Simba safely on his way, I went back to my perch in the baobab-tree and once more peered down on the huddled groups in the *bomba*. A plan had formed itself in my mind, and I wanted to have another look at the lake end of the camp to see whether or not that plan was workable.

The camp was about one hundred yards long and thirty broad at the widest place, narrowing to almost a point at either end.

At the end farthest from my tree the thorn fence was left open upon the steep bank leading down to the lake. That bank was about twenty feet high, as I afterward learned, and sloped at an angle of thirty degrees or thereabout. It was of rough rock, covered with a thin coating of earth on which grew a sort of lantana.

Save for the sentries moving silently about in the flickering flare of the dying fires, and one standing motionless not fifty feet from my tree, every one in the *bomba* appeared to be asleep. Even the miserable slaves, wearied out with their march and their sorrow, now slept fitfully.

After I had thoroughly familiarized myself with the interior arrangement of the camp I slid cautiously back to the ground and wormed my way off in the direction of the lake. Soon I reached the bank and followed this a couple of hundred yards up from the *bomba*, where I remembered having seen a sandy beach, covered with driftwood, beneath a gently sloping shore.

I went down to this beach, kicked off my hide boots and, ignoring possible crocodiles, swam as noiselessly as I could until I judged myself to be opposite the opening in the wall of the *bomba*. Then I turned shoreward, crawled out of the water, worked my way painfully up the brush-covered bank and discovered at the top that I was staring at the back of the nearest Arab tent, some twenty-five feet from me. Silently I wriggled back down the steep slope until once more I felt the cool waters of the lake lapping my feet.

There, hanging on to the bushes, I managed to gather together a little pile of rocks and as well as I could under the conditions marked my landing place so I should know it again. After which I swam back to the sandy beach, resumed my boots and started for the rendezvous with Yankton.

It was now nearly midnight. I had been waiting some fifteen or twenty minutes in the grass back of the baobab-tree when I heard a very faint sound, as of some one crawling gingerly in the grass. A moment later I heard my name whispered and put out my hand and touched Yankton, so close had he come to me in the dark. Back of him were most of the blacks, he said, five or six having been left at the camp with Wilkes, who had charge of the donkeys.

The stars were now all hidden and it had begun to rain again, very gently—more like a heavy dew than rain. While the men, with Simba in charge, squatted in the tall grass, awaiting orders, Yankton and I sat under the baobab, and I explained the situation to him.

"What's your plan?" he asked when I had finished.

"This," I told him. "I'll take five of the men, with guns, and swim to the spot where I left the rocks. My party will work its way up the bank to the crest and hang on there quietly until you make the

Digitized by Google

attack on the front gate and at the sides of the *bomba*. Simba figures there are two hundred of the Arabs—a conservative estimate, I think. But if you crawl up close to the gate and open fire from both sides of the bomba the Arabs will rush to the front to repel the attack. That will give me a chance to sneak in, free some of the slaves and then open fire on the slavers from behind. Taken that way, under a cross-fire, they ought to break easily. What do you think of the plan?"

"Splendid!" whispered Yankton. "If you can get your men and guns to the top of the bank it ought to work as smooth as silk."

"There's any quantity of timber down there to make a light raft for the guns," I added.

Captain Yankton stood up.

"We'd better start," he whispered, and called, more softly than a whisper, to Simba.

Silently the column crept through the grass to the lake, where Simba and I went to work at once on the raft. It was not so dark down there by the water, but the necessity for keeping very quiet made the lashing together of this very crude raft slow work indeed.

Yankton did not wait for the raft to be finished, but turned over to me eight men—Simba and seven others who could swim and use a gun—and then, with forty men under him, started on a detour which would enable him to approach the *bomba* from the other side where he could station his fighters in a semicircle around the opening. My crowd was to wait until he opened fire, unless we were discovered, in which case we were to open fire at once, and Yankton, hearing the shooting, would rush his men and attack.

At last Simba and I and the other workers had our raft—such as it was—ready, and placed on it our guns and some spare ammunition. Then, while I held the thing to keep it from floating away from us, each of the men girded tight his heavy hunting-knife and, pushing the raft before us, we started on our swim in the dark.

Why there were no crocodiles in that lake, or at least, in that part of it, I do not know, but my previous swim had assured me of their absence. At any rate, it was not of crocodiles I was thinking when I entered the water and began to swim, but I'll not deny that I was scared stiff. The odds against me and Yankton and our little party that night were tremendously heavy.

However, I reasoned then, as I've always done, that I could die but once, and, no matter how long I might escape, my time would come. As soon as we were well in motion my scare passed off and I was eager for the fight to begin.

When I reckoned that we were opposite the Arab's camp and due to turn shoreward, I lifted my head as high as I could out of the water and listened. All was quiet in the *bomba*. We turned the raft and it ran upon the shore with a slight grating sound.

I crawled out and felt for my pile of rocks. There it was, and I signaled to my eight men to crawl out after me, bringing the guns and powder. With me in the lead, we climbed, single-file, to the crest of the bank and lay down, pressed close to the earth. A few yards away two Arab sentinels met, spoke to each other and passed on.

I lifted my head. Not twenty yards away from me a fire burned. As I looked an Arab leading a heavily manacled slave that seemed to be his especial charge came up to the fire and sat down on the ground. I wanted very much to see that slave. A knot flared up, the Arab moved a little, and I saw that his man was our Mum Tumbo.

He seemed to be staring straight into my eyes, and though he made no move I felt sure that if he had not seen me he had sensed our presence—he had such a queer way of finding out things he needed to know. I did not believe in the occult—I do not now, but I have never been able to explain Mum Tumbo, even to myself. He had ways of gathering unto himself knowledge that may have been simple enough, once they were understood, but they have remained unknown to me.

However, I was not going to trust too much to his omniscience just then. I wanted him to know we were there and that I had seen him. And so, risking all on the chance of being discovered by the slavers, I lifted myself above the edge of the bank and waved a hand to him. Then I quickly sank down again behind my sheltering bush.

Minute by minute dragged by. I was beginning to fear that the dawn would come and reveal us to the Arabs before the captain struck, for those weary minutes seemed hours to me.

Digitized by Google

And then, suddenly, a shout and a scream tore the silence.

A volley of shots, followed by a storm of shouting from the Arabs and of shrieks from their captives filled the air. From the tent directly in front of us ran a tall, white figure. The Arabs around the fires had leaped to their feet, and the tall man mustered them about the fence at the far end against which the attack was being made. Our plans were working out.

Simba, who had his instructions, leaped past me to the nearest slaves and began striking off their shackles and neck yokes. I rushed to Muni Tumbo, whose guard had released his hold, and, striking off his manacles, told him to aid in freeing others.

The intense fire kept up by Captain Yankton and the constant shouting and cheering of his men evidently caused the Arabs to think they had been attacked by large numbers, and, not knowing their rear was menaced, they had concentrated on the front, so that we were able to work behind them unnoticed. Even after I had squatted down behind my little bush once more, to get my breath and await my moment, I could see that our presence on the lake-front was unsuspected.

The chain of events raced as I watched. The Arabs, perhaps realizing that the attacking force was smaller than they had thought, began to gather in a clump near the gate, preparatory, I thought, to a sortie in force.

That would never do. Once outside and among Yankton's handful of men we would be speedily overcome. I called my men to me and with Simba's help made them understand that when I gave the signal they were to rise and all aim at the tall Arab leader, conspicuous in his white gown. I had hardly finished when the leader showed clear against the light of a still blazing fire, and I gave the word.

The eight rifles, muskets and shotguns spat. The Arab flung his hands in the air and spun round and round like a teetotum—and pitched forward on his face.

And then my men went blood mad. Throwing away their guns, empty now and useless, they sprang to the top of the bank and charged with a yell, drawing the long heavy knives with which they are armed.

I suppose there is a trace of the savage in the best of us. I, too, dropped my gun and caught up a dead Arab's spear and flung myself into the fight.

The death of their leader had shaken the Arabs, and the attack from the rear shook them still more. They were milling around like frightened sheep.

I made a desperate lunge with my unaccustomed weapon at the one nearest me. The point of the spear came into view above his shoulder as he fell toward me down the shaft. I was amazed. The thrust seemed so pitifully inadequate for the result.

While I was struggling to free the spear another Arab seized me about the middle, and we went down in a rolling fury of fighting. I managed to draw my knife and settled that gentleman.

As I rose there came a fresh outburst of yells from behind me. A swarm of freed slaves had flung themselves, like a pack of hungry dogs, upon the slavers. That ended the battle. A few moments later Yankton came bursting through the screen at the end of the *bomba*, battering his way toward us with the barrel of his rifle, the stock of which had been shattered to flinders by his powerful blows.

I was struggling with a third man, a great, evil-smelling Somali negro, who was doing his best to grip my shoulder with ferocious white teeth. Yankton poised himself, raised the rifle-barrel— The grip of the Somali relaxed as he slid to the ground, one side of his bullet-shaped head beaten in.

Some one threw more wood on the fires. They blazed up, lighting the *bomba* brightly. By this glare I saw the Arabs fleeing and rushed after our men to see that they did not follow what was left of the enemy into the forest.

While I was still rounding up the Kroo boys and bearers, with the aid of Simba, who was bleeding from an ugly gash on his right cheek, the east began to turn purple with the coming sun.

At last our men were gathered in the center of the compound and we counted up our losses. Two of my party had been killed. Yankton had lost four in the battle at the gate, and two after they got inside the *bomba*. All of us, without exception, were marked more or less by hacks and cuts, and I was as sore as though I had been beaten.

Simultaneously Yankton and I recalled

Digitized by Google

what it was for which we had been fighting. Mum Tumbo. Where was he? I had not seen him since I had knocked off his shackles.

Feverishly we searched the *bomba*. Many of the slaves had been freed, but Tumbo was not among them, nor was he with those lined up against the *bomba* walls, their yokes and shackles still in place.

"Mum Tumbo!" we called. And the crowds of negroes took up the call, "Mum Tumbo!"

But Mum Tumbo did not answer. We had fought the Arabs and worsted them—but we had lost Mum Tumbo.

X

AFTER half an hour or more of fruitless searching among the slaves, who were now all free or being freed from their shackles, Yankton and I gave up. Mum Tumbo had vanished. We sat down by a dying fire, discouraged. Neither of us could understand what had happened. It seemed almost impossible that the strong negro, with the free use of his hands, had allowed himself to be taken away by the fleeing, frightened Arabs. It was equally hard, and decidedly more disagreeable, to believe we had been deserted by Mum Tumbo.

The body of the Arab chief lay where it had fallen, face downward by the fire. Absently, still absorbed by his problems aroused by the disappearance of Mum Tumbo, Yankton arose, walked over to the body, and turned it face upward.

He gave a little start.

"It's Ibn Said!" he told me. "The man I called on there by the Malagash Lagoon in Zanzibar—remember?"

I nodded, dumfounded. What on earth did this turn of the wheel mean to us?

It was the first time since we had started on the expedition that I had seen Captain Yankton actually downhearted. He gave orders for the burial of the dead—the Arabs as well as our own men—and when this was well under way, began issuing orders for the return march. The natives were already, many of them, on the way.

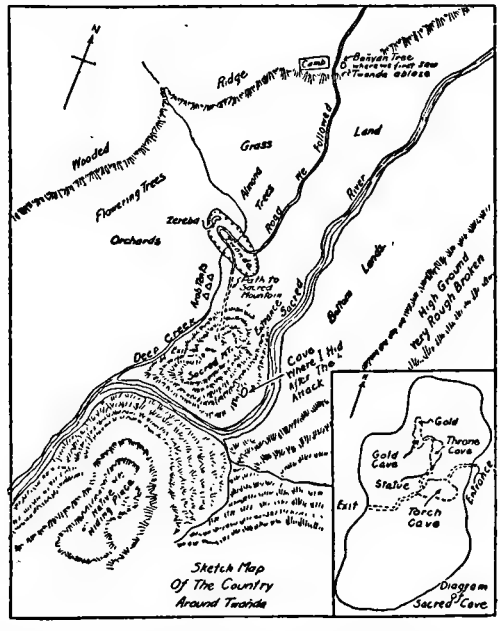
"We shall have to go back to camp for Wilkes and his men and the donkeys," he said. "Then on to Twanda. We'll spend a few days there, making a thorough search for the Yellow Gods. If nothing turns up——"

He sighed and left the sentence unfinished.

It was past five in the afternoon of the day following the fight when we got back to Wilkes and the donkeys. We found them all safe and sound, and Wilkes with nothing of interest to report.

We got supper and camped that night on our old site above the burned village.

Early the next morning we started down the long incline toward Twanda. The road wound down through swelling green hillocks to a silvery river in the center of the valley. As we approached from the heights, this



grass-covered valley, with its great flowering trees, looked like a beautiful park. Indeed, we found when we got well into it that it was in a state of semi-cultivation. There were orchards of almonds, now in full fruit and leaf, and groves of aloes, some of them thirty feet high. And there was no underbrush—only the lush, green grass.

At noon we topped a rise and came upon the burned village of Twanda.

We had thought as we watched the fire from far up on the hills that the entire village was destroyed, but we found enough of it standing to get an idea of what it had once been.

It was very different from the usual African kraal. Instead of rude huts, we found in what might be called the suburbs,

Digitized by Google

where the fire had not reached, houses substantially built on wooden frames covered with coarse grass. Some of these houses were two stories high. We did not go into any of them, but we saw people coming out of them and leaving the second stories by means of ladders on the outside of the houses. There had been some attempt toward street-making, and in the center of the burned area were the still smoking remains of what had once been a heavy stockade.

By the time we had left the village—for we were still looking for Mum Tumbo—we had quite an escort. Some of the people went before us, making signs, and we followed them to a rude, stout bridge and crossed a narrow creek, a tributary of the near-by river.

On the opposite side of the creek we were greeted by what seemed to be a sort of official welcoming party. It was a little group of men, wearing short skirts made of the pieced-together skins of the *'mbega*, a curious kind of white and black monkey we had seen in the trees of the forest heights. These men were unarmed, and they advanced to the bridge to meet us with every sign of pleasure. One of them, a big, important-looking fellow, dressed as the others except that his face was encircled by a fringe of white monkey hair, made a speech in which we several times caught the words "*mkama* Mum Tumbo."

"Our friend seems to be pretty well known in these parts," commented Yankton. "Wonder if he isn't hiding somewhere around here."

These men now took the lead, our former pilots falling in behind with the rest of the people, and we entered what had looked to be an impenetrable forest but which proved to be nothing but a dense, shallow wood. Through this we walked, following no path, until we came to a large compound enclosed by a high *zareba* made of tree-trunks, sunk deeply into the ground and sharply pointed at the top.

Through a gate we passed into this compound and found the walls lined with small huts made of wattled grass, with overhanging roof. At the far end of the enclosure was a very much bigger hut, its overhanging roof widened into a deep *baraza*.

Coming out of this hut was a procession of men and women, headed by a tall man clothed in barbaric finery. Around his head was a shining ring of metal, which, as he came nearer, we made sure was gold, and across his shoulders was flung a long cloak of leopard skin. His middle was girded about with leather, encrusted with shiny stones, and festooned with strips of *'mbega* fur. This very ornate garment stopped just above his knees, from which projected, like the reverse spurs of a cock, long curved steel spikes that glittered in the sun and sparkled as he walked.

As he approached our escort uttered a great shout, and, with uplifted arms, flung themselves face downward on the ground.

"Must be the king," muttered Yankton, and we stood at attention till he had passed pompously by.

Behind his Majesty—for it was the king—came four large negroes, naked as the day they were born. They carried a four-handled stretcher of some kind of polished hardwood on which stood, or sat, some sort of heavy object covered by the skin of a buffalo. Back of these bearers was another set of naked negroes, evidently intended to relieve the first four when they became weary.

And immediately back of the naked negroes, walking alone, was a curiously bent and decrepit old figure whose snow-white wool was daubed with fish-scales and around whose scrawny neck was a string of bladders, inflated and rattling. Around him as he walked jangled and clashed scores of shining disks. If these sequin-like things were not made of gold, then I was much fooled. He was fairly covered with them, from neck to knees, and around his ankles were still more.

"I'd bet on his being the high priest, or witch-doctor, or something like that," murmured Yankton.

Back of him was a procession of almost naked men, their heads shaved in front and black monkey hair braided into the back wool to make long pigtails. They were followed by young women whose heads were so smoothly shaven they glistened in the sun. Both men and women were moving forward in a sort of dance that was a long, syncopated series of jumps, accompanied all the time by a murmuring, rhythmic chant.

The king gave us a look full of curiosity as he passed. Then he seemed to swell with pride and moved majestically on, turning neither to the right nor the left.

Our escort remained prostrate till the

Digitized by Google

stretcher had passed us, rising to salaam again as the decrepit figure under the sequins went by. As the last of the women with the shining polls passed us, the native nearest me touched my arm, and we fell in behind, and followed our leaders through the gate of the *zareba*, over which I now noticed were strung certain charms to keep off evil spirits.

Outside of the compound the procession gathered speed. It also vastly increased in numbers, all falling in behind us. By the time we had passed through the burned area the line back of us must have been a half-mile long.

We saw now that we were headed directly for the Footstool of the Yellow God.

"By Jove, Dabney," said Yankton. "Wouldn't it be funny if we are going to see the ceremony of the melting down of the Yellow God?"

"If we are," I said, getting an inspiration, "that thing on the stretcher covered with the buffalo robe is the image itself."

I think, in our heart of hearts, we had each harbored a doubt that there was a yellow god. Anyway, I felt a sense of relief from something that had lurked back in the recesses of my brain.

I looked backward. The queer leaping and jumping of the queued and shaven heads before us had communicated itself to the motley columns in our rear, all of whom were wailing in a most lugubrious way.

"That's the preliminary moaning Mum Tumbo told me about," said Yankton. "We are going to see the god melted."

Once more he was right. As the sun was beginning to drop behind the western hills we began the slow ascent of the Sacred Mountain.

We had climbed hardly five hundred steep feet from the plain, going first over what appeared to be broken lava and then over great rocks of the same substance, when we came upon a level spot in the side of the towering hill. It was between four and five hundred feet wide and more than three times as long. At its farther end was a rough circle of *msolo*-trees, in the center of which, sheltered by an immense baobab, was an enormous rock.

At the outer edge of the circle the bearers of the stretcher halted, causing a halt in the procession all down the line, and the king and the besequined one, who, we had by this time decided, was a priest or witch-doctor, advanced alone toward the great rock and disappeared from our sight behind the baobab tree.

The moaning increased in terrible crescendos. Beating into this sound from somewhere down the line came the solemn rumbling boom of drums, setting every nerve in my body a-jump, and driving the blacks about us into a frenzy of religious zeal. Slowly the noise increased until, in spite of its thrill and rhythm, it became almost unbearable. And then, just as the last ray of the sun withdrew from the hill, the chanting ceased and the drums stopped with a crash that left us in quivering silence.

That lasted a full minute, while everybody stood motionless. Then three girls, naked, save for wreaths of *elelescho* blossoms, came dancing from behind the rock, plucking the blossoms from their wreaths and throwing them in the air. A single drum back of us began a steady, monotonous pounding.

And then, with uplifted arms and a mighty howl, the multitude of men, women and children flung themselves face downward on the ground just as the four men with the stretcher, immediately followed by the four other bearers, passed inside the circle.

Before the rock under the baobab-tree the bearers put down their burden. The three girls danced around it, and flung upon the buffalo robe the last of their blossoms. Then they disappeared behind the rock.

One by one the muscular bearers bent forward and tried to raise the mass under its coverings, and one by one they failed, each in his turn, although we could see from where we stood that they strained their great muscles until they fairly creaked. As each bearer strained and failed, a new wail went up from the multitude.

"What does all this mean?" I asked Yankton.

"If any one man can lift that idol the favor of the Yellow God is assured," Yankton answered, quoting, as he afterward told me, from Mum Tumbo. "Failure to lift it by a member of the tribe means disaster."

And now back from the shelter of the baobab came the king himself, followed by the witch-doctor, who had in his right hand a crooked stick. Again the people howled with uplifted hands and salaamed, but did not throw themselves this time on the ground.

Digitized by Google

Slowly king and witch-doctor advanced toward the people. The king stopped, and the witch-doctor came nearer and pointed with his crooked stick at one of the warriors, who stood out tall and strong above his fellows.

The warrior came forward, bent his mighty shoulders and tried to lift the idol. He failed.

When the howl that followed this failure had subsided, the witch-doctor pointed his crooked stick directly at me.

"—— it," I whispered. "What's he pickin' on me for?"

Again the witch-doctor pointed and cried aloud. Two of our guard seized me and led me direct to the king. He looked at me with the most intense interest—not curiosity, merely, but interest that seemed to me mixed with awe.

The idiotic-looking witch-doctor sprang into the air with a sort of howl and then touched me on the breast with his crooked stick. At a signal from the king my escort led me to the thing under the buffalo robe.

I knew now that I was expected to lift it.

I was a pretty strong man in those days, as you may have guessed from some of the things I have told you, but having seen those nine negroes—clearly chosen because they were the strongest men of all that strong tribe of men—tackle that job and fail, I was not any too anxious to try my hand. What would happen to me and Yankton and Wilkes, I wondered, if I did try and failed.

I looked at my captain. He waved a reassuring hand, and I stepped to my task.

Thinking I might get a better hold on the unwieldly object, I lifted the buffalo robe, unheeding the cry of dismay that went up from the crowd. Evidently that was no place to uncover a god, but uncover him I did, and stepped back to get a good look, for I remembered that Mum Tumbo had often called me the Man with the Face of the Yellow God.

What I saw was anything but flattering to me. The object I had uncovered bore small resemblances to a human. Tun-bellied, legless, it squatted on spreading feet. The shapeless arms ended in four fingers each that were too short to meet over the round belly, and the head was set flat on the shoulders. There was a rough sort of shaping of the head to make a flat-nosed, blubber-lipped face that narrowed down toward the breast into what was evidently meant to represent a thick, pointed beard.

I wore a thick, pointed, reddish-yellow beard!

A rousing crescendo of shouts and howls from the people reminded me that I had not yet lifted the god. Bending down I put my hands under what was probably meant for the thing's haunches, lifted it clear of the stretcher and bore it off toward the baobab-tree.

XI

THE strength that had made it possible for me to lift and carry the idol several paces gave out suddenly and I was forced to place the thing on the ground and draw a deep breath.

Up came the four fresh bearers, in steady march step, and bearing between them the stretcher. Upon this the idol was once more placed. The king took his stand about two arm's lengths ahead of the stretcher, and at a sign from the witch-doctor I put myself midway between the king and the stretcher, and the procession made its way around the baobab to the other side of the great basalt rock, where I was quick to notice a funnel-shaped hole, which, for all I could tell, led to immeasurable depths below.

At the base of this rock was a crucible on a rude furnace at which four men worked with a pair of bellows remarkably like those used by blacksmiths at home.

The four bearers tumbled the gold image on to a ledge of the sacred rock, and began pounding upon it with a quartet of heavy iron hammers, which soon reduced it to an unrecognizable mass. As they swung the hammers they sang a sort of rhythmic chant that reminded me strongly of the singing of slaves on my father's plantation in Virginia.

They finished with a concerted whoop and stepped back from the mass of gold.

Then came an amazing part of the performance for which I was not at all prepared. One by one, the king leading, the witch-doctor coming next, a long procession passed the ledge and spat upon the mass of gold that had so lately represented to them the Yellow God. Why this was done I do not know. I reckoned then, and still think, that it was an expression of derision for the image because it had failed to ward a

Digitized by Google

off disaster—had not prevented the burning of the village and the capture of many villagers for slaves. Anyway, I was glad I was not called upon to take part in this ritual. I had no mind to spit upon that gold. It still looked good to me.

By this time it was quite dark save for the glow from the furnace.

The crowd around the circle had gone wild, and all semblance of order had gone from the procession that milled ceaselessly around the sacred rock. In the confusion Yankton came up and joined me.

"The cavern must be just below us," he said, "but I have no idea where the entrance is. We'll have to go hunting for it as soon as this orgy of god-melting is over and the people have taken themselves back to the village, but the lord knows when that will be."

By this time the sadly mistreated god was being lifted with bare hands and placed inside the crucible, the outside of which was now red-hot. I could feel the heat waves from it where I stood a dozen yards or more away.

"How are they going to get the stuff out when it's melted?" I asked Yankton.

"Wait and see," he replied, from which I gathered he didn't know any more than I did.

And the method of removing that gold from the crucible was to remain a mystery to us, for just then I saw a man, naked and with heaving breast, come straining into the circle of light and throw himself at the feet of the king. Holding on to the king's feet he stammered out something and his Majesty, with a terrible cry, sprang into the darkness and vanished.

And then came pandemonium. The frantic screaming of women and the wails of terrified children mingled with the terrible yells and cries of the men. Surging past us, in wave upon wave of panic-stricken black humanity, came the thousands of the people of the Yellow God—a god no longer, a people no more.

For behind them, like ravening wolves, were the Arabs, hundreds of them, armed with fire-spitting muskets and bright stabbing-spears and swords.

One struck viciously at me with the butt of his gun. Pinwheels danced dizzily before my eyes and I pitched forward face down—down—down.

Hours afterward I came to myself and found my head glued fast to the base of the sacred rock by the blood that had flowed from my wounded scalp. All about me was quiet. Very slowly I scrambled to my knees. It was broad daylight, so I must have been lying there unconscious all night long. Near me were many bodies, tossed about in fantastic attitudes. The king, a great spear driven through his body, knelt face downward, as if he were worshiping the crucible. Beside him was the body of the witch-doctor, a horrible sight now, like a lean, picked crow, stripped as it was of all the golden sequins. Others less gruesome, more peaceful in their last sleep, were scattered about.

Sickened and still dizzy, I strained my eyes for a sight of Yankton, but saw none. He had been beside me when the Arabs came. Perhaps he had escaped. Hopeful that this was so, I pulled myself to my feet, and made the circuit of the rock. Except for dead men and women, I was completely alone in the Sacred Circle.

Below me in the valley I could see much smoke, and, occasionally, leaping flames. Clearly, nothing was to be left of what was once the sacred city of Twanda.

And then my eyes caught an unfamiliar sight in the valley. Between me and the smoke were two rows of white tents in a camp of almost military exactness pitched on the banks of the river. The Arabs had not yet gone. Looking more closely, I could see small parties of them moving about on the plain, driving captured negroes before them toward the camp.

I looked till the heat of the sun and the pain from my wound drove me to seek shelter under the trees—and fainted.

Consciousness came back to me with the agreeable sensation of cool water on my face and throat. I opened my eyes and saw a native woman bending over me. She was fearfully ugly, with her upper lip enlarged and made hideous by a big *pelele* of polished white wood, and a *chipini* which didn't fit in the side of her nose. But her eyes were kind, and she poured a little of the cool water from the gourd she had into my parched mouth.

It was just what I needed. Slowly my strength began to come back to me. Presently I sat up, grasped the gourd and drained it dry. The good water seemed to run through my empty veins like fine wine. I could have shouted, if it had not been for

Digitized by Google

steady pounding and throbbing in my head.

I motioned to the woman for more water. She disappeared with the gourd and returned shortly with it filled to the brim. This time I drank but a part of it, and had her pour the remainder slowly, coolingly, refreshingly over the cut in my scalp. By this time I felt able to walk again and proceeded to do so.

But the woman clutched me quickly by the coat and pulled me down again. Her keener eyes had seen what I now saw—the glittering spearpoints of a party of Arabs crossing the hill below.

For a while we lay motionless, the woman beside me. Then she lifted her head and finally her body and stood upright, motioning for me to rise. Once more she took the hem of my coat in her fingers and drew me this time back of the sacred rock. A flock of vultures scattered at our coming.

In spite of these unsavory birds and the reason for their hovering near the sacred rock, I had now sufficiently recovered as to get back some of my old curiosity about and interest in the gold of the Yellow God. I wanted to look into the crucible. I wanted to look down the funnel-shaped hole into the cavern, which opening I could now see, was not more than eight inches in diameter and set in a depression in the rock. I wanted to throw a pebble or something into the hole to sound its depth. I wanted to hunt for the circlet of gold I had seen on the king's head.

But with the woman tugging persistently at my coat I could not pause.

Down a rugged narrow path between the rocks on the side of the hill away from the burned village, and hidden from the plain by a screen of bush and trees hung with moss, we made our way to an open spot in the underbrush. Here the woman motioned me to lie down in the shade of a tree. I obeyed, wonderingly and not too willingly, for I was desperately hungry, and my ugly guide glided off and left me, turning back to make signs to me which I interpreted meant I was to wait there until she returned.

For what seemed to me a long time I waited. A rock python showed his head from around a boulder, eyed me with cold disdain and slid his long body rapidly off into the bush. I recalled that the natives found this non-poisonous serpent good eating, and was beginning to wonder if a piece of it, nicely broiled, wouldn't be better than starvation when I heard footsteps, and looking around, saw my guide coming back. She was smiling broadly and knelt at my feet to present me with a gourd of goat's milk and some stewed antelope wrapped in a banana leaf. I ate ravenously and felt much refreshed.

My black mentor showed delight. When I had finished the last shred of the meat, which was nicely seasoned with salt, and drained the last drop of goat's milk, she laughed aloud. Taking the empty gourd and motioning me to follow, she started swiftly through the bush, turning her head from time to time to favor me with an immense smile which I took to mean approval, or it might have been admiration. When she smiled like that her distended upper lip almost hid her flat nose.

For half an hour or more we walked, coming at last to a particularly dense clump of lichened trees and underbrush. Into this my guide turned, worming her way forward on her hands and knees in places and leaving me to follow as best I could.

We came out into a tiny clearing, not half a dozen yards across, up from which rose what appeared to be the twin brother of the sacred rock on the mountain, except that instead of being bare of all vegetation this rock was covered with creepers, and littered with dead and rotting leaves. Lifting up a clinging creeper, the woman showed me a hole near the base of the rock.

The hole did not look inviting, but I judged that the woman wanted to hide me for some reason—perhaps until the Arabs had gone, so I crawled in. The first few feet of the entrance was so narrow I was afraid I'd get wedged in, but soon the passage widened and I came upon a small cave, dimly lighted from the entrance, which was comparatively straight.

The cave had evidently been used before for sleeping-quarters. At one end of it was a heap of the long, sweet-smelling grass the natives in all that part of Africa use for beds, and over this was a mat, well woven and clean. I sank down on this with a sigh of relief, feeling safe and very tired. The woman, who had come in a little behind me, came to me with the gourd now filled with water and a bunch of the thick leaves of the aloe. After she had washed the wound in my scalp she bruised these leaves and laid them on my head, then pressed my eyelids and emitted a loud snore.

Digitized by Google

I took the hint and dropped comfortably off to sleep.

It was long past noon, I judged by the slant of the light, when I awoke with a start and realized where I was and what had happened. My head was sore to the touch, but felt sound, and I knew that it was rapidly healing.

A multiplicity of questions were forcing themselves upon me. What had happened to Yankton? Where was he? And Mum Tumbo? Was that queer savage who had got us into all this excitement and trouble alive or dead? If he was alive, had he been treacherous? And Wilkes, plucky old one-eyed sailorman—where was he? We had left him in charge of a native guard with the donkeys and bearers. Had he escaped the Arabs? And where were the bearers and the donkeys?

Coming back to my own case, what was going to happen to me? The cave I saw as I looked about its confined space was empty. My kindly and hideous handmaiden had vanished and had left me no more food or water.

I lifted myself from my comfortable couch and crawled through the passage to the air and sunshine. My attendant was nowhere in sight, but I knew I could find my way to the Footstool of the Yellow God.

Why I wanted to go there again I did not know, save that it was to find that same spot that we had made our long journey into Africa. And always, of course, there was the lure of the gold. But as I worked my way through the bush and climbed the path up the mountain side another thought came to me that made me quicken my steps.

Had the Arabs made off with the gold in the crucible?

What good so much gold would have done me alone in the jungle of Equatorial Africa, Heaven alone knows. However, true to the instinct of my race, the very thought of it set my fingers a-tingle and put strength and briskness into my legs.

The sun was beginning to sink behind the trees when I came out on the level back of the sacred rock once more, passing, on my way, a skulking hyena with bulging sides. The sacred rock was black with vultures, as was also the ground under the baobab-tree in front of the crucible. They hardly stirred at my approach, so full they were, and so bold. Keeping as far away as possible from them and that which had called them there, I walked over to the *barabara* where it dropped down the side of the hill and scanned the whole of the plain. The tents of the Arabs had vanished. There was not a sign of life in the valley, save for a few scattered cattle and some zebras on their way to water.

I listened intently. From far away I could hear the cry of an owl. Nearer a young leopard screamed, but there was no sound, just as there had been no sight, of living man. I was alone with the hyenas and the vultures on the Footstool of the Yellow God.

The sun dropped out of sight. Conquering my physical aversion for the place and its unlovely occupants, I went to the sacred rock.

The fire of the furnace was out; the crucible cold. In the gathering gloom I craned forward and peered within. The crucible was empty.

With a little cry of disappointment, though I had more than half expected this, I turned and ran from the rock, straight into the arms of my captain who was just emerging from the bush.

And just behind Yankton was Mum Tumbo, carrying his spear.

XII

I COULD hardly believe my eyes. Yankton and Mum Tumbo, both safe and apparently unharmed! I'm afraid I swore a little to relieve my feelings. I know my captain did.

When we had cooled down a bit Yankton, his big hand still gripping my shoulder, asked—

"How did you get out of it?"

"Oh," I explained, "an Arab hit me a wipe over the head, and I went to sleep. When I awoke it was sun-up, and I was alone with a lot of dead natives, including his Majesty and the witch-doctor. The Arabs must have thought me dead, for they worked around me all night moving that gold."

"Moving that gold didn't take 'em long," the captain broke in. "The first thing they did was to kick out the fire under the crucible. Then they lighted torches and lifted out the gold before it had time to get hot through."

"But where were you to see all this?" I asked, very much mystified.

Digitized by Google

"Up a *msolo*-tree," grinned Yankton. "When the rush came I ducked, expecting you to do the same. On the edge of the crowd somebody grabbed my arm. It was Mum Tumbo, who at once advised me to climb a tree. I did and spent most of the night there, watching the whole performance. And who do you think commands the Arabs?"

"Not Dom Silva?" I cried.

"Dom Silva," he said savagely. "I saw him with my own eyes. He stuck his spear through the king after somebody else had killed him."

"Dom Silva here," I said vacuously. "How does that fit in with Ibn Said dead down there at the *bomba* by the lake?"

At this Mum Tumbo stepped forward.

"Let that wait a while, *bwana*," he said. "The Arabs have started for the coast it is true, but they are many—more than a thousand fighting men in all, with many servants. Some of them may come back. It is not safe here. Besides, I have much to tell you and to show you. Let us go."

Without more words we three filed off, Mum Tumbo leading. He led us off by the rough path I had so recently climbed, but half-way down the hill branched off into another which was even more difficult to negotiate in the dark. By the stars overhead I saw that we were swinging round, making a sort of detour that would take us back under the crest of the hill, beneath the circle and toward the plain of Twanda.

"Here," said Yankton, "or hereabouts I spent the rest of last night after I left the tree, and nearly all of today."

Shortly after this we crossed the broad path leading down toward the river, and leaving this behind, continued dropping down the mountain-side till we must have been near the base. Here we came upon a deep gully or *donga* into which we plunged. Fifty yards or so up this cleft he led us till we came to a great rock, leaning against the side of the cleft, and, it looked to me there in the starlight, effectually blocking our way.

But Mum Tumbo was not ready either to stop or to turn back. Dropping down on his hands and knees he began to crawl, it seemed to me, straight into the rock.

"Follow me," his low voice came back to us.

And when we had squeezed ourselves through the narrow passage between the rock and the side of the *donga*, and once more could stand upright, he added:

"Let one of you hold fast to this, the handle of my spear, and the other upon the clothing of the first. We go to many dangers for the unknowing foot. Walk carefully, therefore, and keep close to me."

And so, with Yankton touching the handle of Mum Tumbo's spear and me swinging on to my captain's jacket, we fared forth into a darkness which was like the inside of a ship's bilges.

Soon the air began to turn thick and heavy, so heavy that I was forced to pant twice to get one full breath. Once when I slipped a little and struck out blindly with both hands to save myself I could touch nothing on either side of me, and there was the sense of a pit dropping away from my feet.

"Hang on to me, Dabney," said my captain, and after that I did.

How long that tramp lasted I have no idea, but finally there was a puff of better air in our faces. We made a sharp turn in the dark, and I had a feeling that the way beneath my feet had become broad and firm and that the walls were nearer, outlining a path—a comfortable feeling after the first part of that queer journey underground.

And now we seemed to be climbing steeply. This part of the way lasted about ten minutes, I reckoned, when we reached a sort of landing where Mum Tumbo halted and, commanding us to stand still, left us. How he could find his way about in that place puzzled me, though he probably knew it as well as I knew the way to my tobacco-pouch in the dark of my berth aboard the *Dancing Sue*.

"Where do you suppose he's gone now?" I asked, as we waited in the black darkness for our guide to return.

"Don't know," replied Yankton, "but I hope he hasn't slipped away from us again. I should not like to try to find my way out of this place without him."

Just then a flicker of light ran along the basalt walls of the cavern, and Mum Tumbo, torch in hand, appeared around a bend.

"This way," he called, and we climbed another incline of about fifty feet and came upon an enormous chamber in the rock.

That this was a natural excavation was evident from the irregularity of its sloping sides and roof. In one corner was a pile of torches, similar to the torch Mum Tumbo

Digitized by Google

held. For the rest, so far as I could see, the cave was empty.

Driving the point of his torch deep into a fissure of the rocky floor, the negro squatted down on his heels native-fashion and motioned us to sit before him. I sank down on the torch-pile and Yankton came to anchor with his back against the wall.

"And now," began Mum Tumbo, "to the clearing up of many things."

"And the first," I interrupted, voicing a worry that had nagged me all day, "is about Wilkes and our donkeys and our bearers."

Yankton's faced clouded.

"We don't know any more about them than you do," he answered. "I hope the warning reached Wilkes in time for him to clear out to some safe place with the bearers and the donkeys; but I don't know.

"The One-Eyed One has come to no harm," Mum Tumbo rumbled, in his deep voice. "I feel sure of that."

"If you feel that he is safe, Tumbo, then he is safe," said Captain Yankton with grave sincerity. "I've never known you to have the wrong 'feel' about anything yet. How do you feel about this expedition of ours."

"That you will need a strong heart," said Mum Tumbo promptly.

Then he went on, without pause, but speaking always in his slow, deliberate, carefully chosen English:

"You have marveled that Ibn Said should have been with the slave-hunters. Ibn Said was a traitor to every one, even himself, as most Arabs are. He tried to trick Dom Silva, being bribed by promises I had made him. Because of this he gave you information as to where I might be found. He gave that information to Dom Silva as well. For this I was prepared.

"It was Ibn Said who landed on the river-bank the night before we left the *Dancing Sue*, and sent back to Dom Silva news of our caravan's strength. I knew this when I saw his track. He has a club foot.

"His caravan which began the devastation of Twanda, and with which you so bravely fought in the *bomba* by the lake was but a spying party sent out ahead by Dom Silva. That he fired Twanda and captured the slaves which you liberated was not a part of Dom Silva's orders, but a part of Ibn Said's treachery to Dom Silva. Lucky for him he was killed in that fight. Had he lived Dom Silva would have treated him as—only Dom Silva can."

He paused and was silent so long that the stillness became oppressive. I wanted to shout or cry out. When he began again it seemed to me that what he was saying had no connection with us or the Yellow God or even with Mum Tumbo himself. It began like a story, or chapter from the Bible, a style doubtless learned from his missionary teacher.

"There was a certain king of a land far to the south of this place," said the story-teller, "and he had a wife called The Lily, young and very fair—the joy of all that land for her beauty.

"The king loved her, but she loved not the king, but the brother of the king. And well was she loved by the brother of the king.

"And it came about that one night as the king slept apart from her with one of his other wives that The Lily fled with her lover, the king's brother, and came to this place. Here they rested, and because of the great strength of my father, a warrior, here he was persuaded by the people to take up his abode.

"And here was I born, and with me my sister, who was called The Gazelle, because her eyes were like the eyes of the gazelle, and her feet swift in the running.

"My father did not follow the custom of our people and take to himself other wives, for all his heart was given to my mother, The Lily, whose hair was long and soft, and whose skin was golden, and whose nose was not flat like the nose of the people of Africa, but was like the nose of Bwana Dabney. And with this nose she marked me."

He touched the Hebraic feature of his own face, to Yankton's amusement, since he had just said this nose was like mine. Then he took a pinch of snuff and continued:

"We grew fast, my sister and I, and my sister grew to be very beautiful. When we were not yet grown up we were alone one day by the river, gathering flowers to make wreaths for our mother's long hair. We had never heard of the slavers, but they came that day, the Arab slavers, and took my sister captive. They tried to take me also, but I killed one of them with my spear and made my escape. But I could not rescue my sister.

"That night, while the Arabs were in their *bomba*, with many captives, among whom was also my mother, The Lily, my father led the men of Twanda to attack. The Arabs lost many men, but my father was killed

Digitized by Google

before my eyes, for I, although but a boy, had gone with him, and the man whose spear ran him through was—Dom Silva. And my mother was borne away from me, and the man who took her to be his woman was—Dom Silva.

"I, too, was taken to be a slave, and I went under my yoke over the long road, but far behind my mother. And one day, bearing my load, I came upon her lying where they had thrown her beside the *barabara* to die. She called to me, for she could still speak, weak as she was, but when I would have stopped the drivers with their whips drove me on, and I had to leave her there, my beautiful mother, for the hyenas and vultures.

"My sister, too, Dom Silva, the half-caste dog, took for his own. Before we had been long on the march she was no longer a child.

"I saw her being put aboard one of the boats when we got to the coast, but I was far from her, for she was under the advance guard, and I under the rear. I have never seen her since, but I know that she still lives—now a slave in the palace of the sultan of Zanzibar.

"In the confusion of getting the people—so many of them there were—in the boats, I made my escape by working my head through the yoke which was made for a man and I was still a boy. I made my way into the bush. There I came upon a white man. He was a missionary, and he was going to a compound on the Zambesi, and took me with him, for he understood the language of my father's people. With the missionaries I lived for fourteen years, learning well the tongue of the English, but forgetting nothing of the wrongs that had been done to me and to my people.

"When I left the missionaries I was a man full grown, and in my heart there was a great longing for the hills and the plain of Twanda. I came back here. Because of the things I had learned from white men, and what I knew of the black man, because I myself am black, I became a power among the people of Twanda. They would have made me king if I had willed. I did become *mkama*, as I told you, *bwana*.

"But the people of Twanda were not, when I returned to them, as they had been in my childhood, and while my father lived. They had grown weak. Where there had been thousands of fighting men—*el moran*, we call them—there could now be found only a few hundreds. And they were not brave as had been the warriors of my father's time. To have been their king would not have been the glory of which my father dreamed. Besides, I could not forget the debt I owed to my father, my mother and my sister. I left Twanda and went to Zanzibar.

"There I learned that my sister was a slave of the sultan. I learned, too, that the sultan loves gold, even as the half-caste Dom Silva loves gold. I bethought me of the gold of the Yellow Gods. With that gold the freedom of my sister could be bought."

"Why didn't you go back then and get the gold and buy your sister?" I asked, out of my ignorance of the Arab.

Yankton answered me.

"He couldn't have done that," said the captain. "The sultan would have taken his gold and added Mum Tumbo to his slaves."

"No black man can trust an Arab," added Mum Tumbo. "So I went back to Africa's coast, being minded to travel south to the birthplace of my father, for I remembered that he had said there were white men in that place who could be trusted. On my way I met you, my father."

His cavernous eyes rested on Captain Yankton with deep affection.

"And what is it you would have me do, Tumbo?" asked Yankton, and I felt that we were at last getting to the point.

"I would have you, my father, go back to Zanzibar with much gold and buy free my sister.

"And then I would have you bring about the downfall and disgrace of Dom Silva, the half-caste dog. With gold he can be kicked out of high places. With gold to the friends of the sultan can Dom Silva be brought so low that even the dogs in the streets of Zanzibar will scorn him."

Surging hate bit into every word he uttered. For the first time since I had known him Mum Tumbo was stirred so that his voice shook. His lips drew back from his white teeth in a sort of snarl. The soul of the man seemed to stand naked before us.

"You, white men, can do this. I, who am black, never. But through me, Mum Tumbo, the black man, this half-caste dog shall suffer. I could have killed him any one of many times. But such a punishment is too light. Death comes to us all. Dom Silva must have worse than death!"

Digitized by Google

He stopped abruptly, stood up, lighted for himself another torch, as well as one each for Captain Yankton and me.

"Let us go," he said, "to the gold of the Yellow Gods."

XIII

IN A sort of alcove hollowed out of the rock by some outburst of the forces that, in the dim ages before, had formed the cavern, were two arched openings. Choosing the one at the left, Mum Tumbo went forward.

"That one," he said with a wave of his torch toward the opening at the right, "leads to another entrance into this cave. It is that the witch-doctors and priestesses use when they come to the door of the holy place to make offerings to the spirit of the Yellow Gods."

"How far does this cavern run back into the hill, Mum Tumbo?" I asked, and was not amazed at the answer—

"A mile and a half to the door of the holy place."

And now began a most arduous journey. The path narrowed and wound upward at a sharp incline. It was exceedingly rough, being covered with broken stones and hemmed in by jagged boulders.

Panting in the mephitic air we toiled along after Mum Tumbo, who was coughing from the low-hanging smoke of the torch he carried, rounded a sharp elbow, and came plump upon the body of a negro, the hands of which still clutched the torn fragment of an Arab burnoose.

"What the —— does this mean?" gasped the captain.

Mum Tumbo smiled his inscrutable smile, but said nothing.

Stepping carefully so as to avoid the ugly thing grinning up at us there in the red flare of the torch, we moved on and came at last—I, for one, still in fear of some unguessed disaster—to an egg-shaped cavity in the rocky passage. In its center and standing upon a roughly rounded heap of stones was a crude statue of the Yellow God carved by devout hands out of the basalt rock of the mountain. Directly behind this was an opening, evidently the work of human hands, for the edges had been squared to fit a heavy wooden door, now battered from its strong iron hinges which had been let into the rock with no mean craftsmanship.

At sight of this broken door Yankton gave a low cry of dismay.

"We are too late, Dabney," he said to me over his shoulder. "The Arabs have been before us."

But Mum Tumbo gave us no time to ponder over this latest development. With a wave of his spear he drew us behind him into the sacred holy of holies of the people of the Yellow God.

It was a great cave-chamber, larger than any we had passed, and arched over our heads into a swelling dome so high that I, realizing that we must be now almost directly under the sacred circle on the mountain side, thought how thin was the floor of earth and rock on which the thousands had danced and warred the night before. I stumbled against something and looked down.

The floor of the chamber was littered with corpses, the monkey-hair queues of some of the men showing all too plainly that warriors, who should have stayed behind to protect the people, had been among the first to flee for refuge in the sanctuary of the god.

Mum Tumbo looked somberly upon the dead.

"The manhood of Twanda has been sapped, even as I have said," he muttered with a sweep of his torch over the queued heads of the one-time warriors. "There was no fight left in these who should have fought to the death."

"Perhaps they lacked a leader, Tumbo," suggested Yankton, but Mum Tumbo moved on in silence.

A shrine, grotesquely carved and with a massive throne, stood empty before us. We could see that some heavy object had but recently been dragged from this throne, and I guessed, as did Yankton, that one of the tubby gods of gold had been there. At length we came to a spot where the roof and floor were so close together that we were forced to bend almost double in order to pass. Mum Tumbo dropped down on his hands and knees and finally to his belly. We did likewise, and thus, pushing our torches before us, we literally wriggled through the last few feet of the passage, till we came to a depression in the floor.

Sliding down, Yankton and I following, Mum Tumbo reached the level and scrambled to his feet. We stood up also and found ourselves on the rim of a bowl about

Digitized by Google

a man's length across. Our torches flickered in a breath of air that came down to us from a funnel-shaped hole in the rock overhead. Through this hole I saw the glimmer of a star.

I was conscious of a throbbing in my throat. My eyes burned and my head swam.

Mum Tumbo brought his torch downward, and its red rays played on the sides and bottom of the bowl. Only here and there a tiny gleam was caught and reflected. The bowl, like the crucible, had been scraped clean.

Mum Tumbo staggered back as if he had been struck a death blow. Clearly here was something for which he, with all his curious knowledge, had not been prepared. There was tragedy in his cavernous eyes.

"I had expected this," said Captain Yankton. "The Arabs were before us."

"But the sacred gold," said Mum Tumbo, and for once he spoke merely as a mystified negro, "that gold was fast in the bowl, held inviolate by the god-spirit. Only the king or I could have released it."

"Nonsense, Mum Tumbo," said Yankton a little sharply. "You know better than that, don't you? I did not think you believed in this religion of your people. I thought you were too wise for that."

"No man is wiser than his god," said the savage, and sat down on his haunches.

I cast my torch around the cavern. Not even a flake that was worth gathering had been left for us. Mum Tumbo sensed what I was doing.

"The long fingers of the Arabs leave nothing that can be taken," he said bitterly, "and Dom Silva, the half-caste, leaves less."

"——!" said Yankton.

"And you saw in that holy place we passed, my master, the empty shrine?" grieved Mum Tumbo. "That shrine held a bigger and heavier god-statue than the one lifted by Bwana Dabney. That, too, the Arab devils and the half-caste dog have stolen."

"Great guns!" shouted Yankton suddenly. "What are we wasting time here for? Lets us get after Dom Silva and his Arabs. We must find Wilkes and get the men together. You, Tumbo, shall muster some of the men of Twanda to go with us. There must be some of your fighting men left. We'll follow the half-caste and catch him, too. We'll get that gold yet—some of it, anyhow!"

Ripples of excitement raced over me at the determination in his voice. Mum Tumbo, too, seemed moved. In a moment we were working back through the narrow passage and were on our way past the empty shrine, stopping only long enough in the next cave for Mum Tumbo to gather more torches, and light a new one, and then on again.

Leaving the passage by which we had entered, Mum Tumbo took the other, which was wider and easier to travel. The torch he carried showed us more corpses, some of them women with shaven heads—the priestesses we had seen in the king's procession back of the warriors—pitiful people of the Yellow God, lying tossed about on the way to what they believed was safety, victims of Arab spear and gun.

Almost before we realized it, so much shorter and easier was this passage, we found our feet treading the lush grass of the Plain of Twanda. Here Mum Tumbo broke into the swinging stride of the marching man, the stride that eats up the miles as they come, until we reached the river.

The river was in flood.

"Can't we find a boat somewhere, Mum Tumbo?" I asked.

"The people of Twanda were not river men," spoke the negro. "But farther up in the hills the river is narrow, and there is a ford. Shall we go there?"

"Oh," said Yankton. "Let's swim it here. It can't be more than two hundred yards across."

"There are crocodiles, my father," warned Mum Tumbo.

"We'll dodge 'em," said Yankton.

And we did. Three of the hüge creatures lay in the mud on the opposite side of the river. They lifted their heads and looked at us as we made for the firm ground, but did not move from their resting-place.

"Gorged!" said Yankton with a grunt. "Gad, what a feast they must have had!"

It was now morning. As we made our way through clumps of acacia and sweet-smelling flowers, I protested that we were leaving Wilkes and the bearers and the donkeys behind.

"Does the man with the face of the Yellow God believe that Wilkes and the bearers and the donkeys are still in Twanda?" came Mum Tumbo's voice rumbling back to me, with something of its old assurance.

Not having any fitting response to make,

Digitized by Google

I said nothing. Soon we were well out of sight of the burned village and were winding our way in and out among the foot-hills of the short mountain range. Mum Tumbo, describing a long semicircle, entered the mouth of a *donga* that widened out and disclosed presently to our astonished eyes several hundred of the people of the Yellow God.

Somewhere a donkey brayed, and another. And then, wonder of wonders, there, grinning like a one-eyed monkey and running toward us, was old Wilkes!

The old sailorman, as he explained to us, had been caught up in the first rush of the negroes to escape the slave-hunting, gold-seeking Arabs. Mustering our Kroo boys he had herded them and the donkeys across the ford up the river, no doubt the one Mum Tumbo had told us about, and, following some of the refugees and followed by many others, had made his way through circuitous routes to this the secret hiding-place of the tribe.

He had worried over our possible fate, he said, but knew there was nothing he could do until he got definite information. He had got this information late the night before when a woman of the hills had come in and by means of the sign language and the help of Simba, who had picked up a few words of Twanda speech, had made him know that she had found me.

"I knew it was you and not the captain, Mr. Dabney," he said, "because the woman kept making signs like she was pulling her beard. Still, I thought if you was safe, so was Cap'n Yankton. She was a ugly old thing, with a piece o' wood wobblin' round her nose, like some o' them natives we passed on the way."

XIV

MUM TUMBO, under Captain Yankton's orders, called out half a dozen of the younger men, a part of the remaining *el moran*, and sent them out into the hills to assemble all the fighting men that could be had. By noon these men were coming in from other hiding-places near by.

Yankton and Wilkes and I were busy for more than half the night, making preparations for the start the next morning. By sun-up we were ready.

Our donkeys we abandoned to the people of Twanda. We were going to travel faster than the little beasts could go. Of the arms and ammunition we had left enough to give to each of our own followers a rifle, a musket or a shotgun and a plentiful supply of bullets and powder. Our savage cohorts, who numbered nearly five hundred, had their own weapons, and Mum Tumbo saw to it that every man of them was armed with the short, broad-bladed stabbing-spear he knew so well how to use, the throwing-knife and hippo-shield that made up a warrior's equipment.

Sixty hours after the attack on the Footstool of the Yellow God, nearly forty-eight hours after Dom Silva and his Arabs had started with their captives and our gold, the head of our columns swung out of the defile and started the long chase.

Yankton and I were with the advance guard, which was led by Mum Tumbo. Wilkes commanded a party of twelve of our Kroo men, who were detailed to wait upon the savage *impi* and to bring up the rear and prevent straggling. Far out on either hand skirmished flankers, Mum Tumbo's idea, and several hours in advance of the entire army were scouts sent out by Captain Yankton the night before and carefully instructed, with the help of Mum Tumbo as interpreter, to run down the Arabs and bring us tidings of Dom Silva's movements.

And now began the most tremendous march that I, an old soldier, have ever taken. But I didn't mind it, especially at the start. As we swung along, lightly loaded, the clean sweet air of early morning in our lungs, I exulted that I should be able to pay for the cut on my head, the disappointment we had found in the cave of the Yellow God, and to help old Mum Tumbo get back some of his own.

"How much of a start do you think Dom Silva has?" I asked Yankton, who was plowing along steadily at my side.

"He started about noon day before yesterday," the captain answered. "I figure that even if he drives his slaves hard, as he will do, though he has, I imagine, no suspicion that we are on his trail, that he can not do more than twelve or fifteen miles a day—say fifteen at the best. That would make him, at the outside and allowing all luck with him, thirty-five miles ahead of us. He will keep his gang going without avoidable stop, and we shall have to do the same. At this rate we ought to overtake him on

Digitized by Google

the fifth or sixth day, allowing that we do twenty miles a day."

This reasoning seemed good to me, but, as you will see, it did not allow for contingencies.

The first day the column easily made the twenty miles allotted by Yankton. We halted that night on the bank of a rapidly flowing river, which Mum Tumbo told us the Arabs had crossed at a ford some miles farther up. There was no sort of ford here for us, however, and we roused the men out long before sun-up and set them building rafts of reeds which grew in vast quantities by the bank. These reeds were cut and bound tightly together in bundles and the bundles lashed together to make the rafts.

For the light-armed naked warriors the problem was simple. They placed their spears and shields on the improvised rafts and paddled across, resting on the raft when they got tired. With us, we had to make our unbuoyant raft provide a support that would keep the powder and guns dry. This took them more time, and the last of the dew had vanished and the sun was hot overhead before we were ready to start for the opposite shore.

And when, after a prodigious amount of splashing and not a little profanity, we puffed up the steep bank we found that our native allies had scattered in pursuit of fresh meat, having been moved thereto by the sight of a herd of eland.

Their hunt was successful. They were back in three or four hours, but we could not get them started until they had skinned the beasts, the successful knife-throwers having been given the tails of their respective victims to attach to their shields, the apex of the heart to eat to give them strength, and as many of the men as there were portions to go around had eaten bits of the antelopes' noses to help them in trailing their enemies. By the time all these rites had been performed and we got our men assembled and on the march again, it was past noon.

As a result of this we did hardly more than half of our twenty-mile stint that day, and went into camp, just after sunset, very much depressed.

"Dom Silva will be showing his heels to us without trouble if this sort of thing keeps up," said Captain Yankton.

But Mum Tumbo was less pessimistic.

"Be assured, my father," he said, "that the half-caste is having trouble of his own."

And soon we found this was so. His captives, driven to the limit of their endurance, were beginning to drop out and to be left by the wayside to die—or to recover, as fate willed.

Some of them recovered. By the time we had been seven days on the chase we had added a dozen of them to our party, for we were following now almost in Dom Silva's footsteps. More of them joined us from time to time.

From our new recruits we learned of the tremendous hardships to which the members of Dom Silva's caravan were being subjected, his innate cruelty being doubtless doubly increased by his urgent desire for speed. We learned also that as yet the slaver had no knowledge of our following host. We tried to gather some information regarding the gold, but, save for the statement that about fifty of the strongest of the negroes who were envied because they were well fed and kept at the head of the caravan took turns in carrying two palanquins—in which the other slaves believed Dom Silva was conveying a number of picked women to the sultan—we could get no satisfaction.

However, we had learned enough. We were sure that those palanquins contained gold, not women.

At last came a night in which Mum Tumbo appeared before me and Captain Yankton as we sat by the fire—a guttering and insufficient fire that tried to hide itself from fitful gusts of rain—squatted down on his hams, took a prodigious sniff of snuff, and held his hands to the flame.

"What's on your mind, Tumbo?" said Captain Yankton. "Speak."

"We draw near to the half-caste and his Arabs, *bwana*," said the black. "He is not now more than five or six miles ahead. Is it wise?"

"If I knew the country better, I'd try to take roundance on Dom Silva and meet him, instead of trying to overtake him. That would put us at a much better advantage. Can you tell me of any road we might take to do this?"

Mum Tumbo considered. Finally he spoke.

"Yes, my father. You could branch off to the east, keeping between the coast and the caravan of Dom Silva, and strike the

Digitized by Google

slave road at a place I know of where we might hide and lie in wait for the coming of the half-caste dog. A thousand men might there lie hidden and unsuspected."

"Good!" chortled Yankton. "Just the place we want. Can you lead us to the spot?"

"Straight as the arrow flies, my father."

"All right," said the captain. "Tomorrow, then, we turn off to the east, and now we'd better turn in for some sleep."

Our marching the next day took us into the edge of the jungle lands of the coast country, and with each day it became more and more difficult to make the distance planned. Food also became harder to get. The whole district had been harried by slavers, and though we were now off the direct line of route from the coast to the interior, the natives we encountered were hostile and fearful, unwilling to have any dealings with us.

At last we came to a wide, well-beaten pathway, strewn here and there with the bleaching bones of cattle and the skulls of men and women. It was the slave highway to the coast, and we were ahead of Dom Silva's caravan. We encamped that night on the spot Mum Tumbo had told us about.

Before we turned in Captain Yankton sent out runners to go up the slave road and bring back tidings of the caravan of the half-caste.

By ten o'clock the next morning we were ready for Dom Silva and his men. Our plans for attack were simple. Yankton had told off our savage allies to line each side of the road where it ran, for half a mile or so, between the steep walls of a gully, and they had gathered rocks into little piles where they would be handy to hurl down on the Arabs.

With Yankton's sanction I prepared a little surprize of my own.

With the help of five of our regular men I had sunk a mine at the head of the *donga* where we whites were to take our stand, using as much of our precious powder as I thought we could spare. By tearing one of my two remaining shirts into strips, which I fastened together and soaked in wet gunpowder, I had a fuse that promised to sputter most satisfactorily. The road led directly over this mine.

On the high banks of the *donga*, just where it debouched into the road, we had built up a wall of rocks from which we could fire down upon the Arabs and concealed it by quantities of thorn and brushwood.

It was blazing hot, with the African sun insufferably a-glare as I took my position beside the mine, which, like the wall, was hidden by brushwood. By moving the brush a little aside I could see up the road about three hundred yards to a jutting rock.

Silent the road lay, hot, white and deserted. Our scouts had not returned, and I was beginning to grow restless, afraid that our trap had been discovered, when one of the scouts came flying through the brush with a message for Captain Yankton. Almost immediately the head of the caravan came into view around the rock buttress, a big, scarred, Somali negro in the lead, followed by an advance party of fifty or more. Their feet shuffled in the dust, as if they were very weary. Slowly, without any apparent interest in their surroundings, the first of the advance guard reached our concealed mine.

"Halt!" sang out Captain Yankton.

Taken by surprize, the men stopped short. Yankton advanced a little and asked the Somali, who evidently had Arab blood in his veins, how far in the rear Dom Silva was.

At first the Somali did not seem inclined to answer. Yankton repeated the question in Swahili and in the East Coast *lingua franca*. One of the Arabs stepped forward and, before the Somali could have spoken, began a harangue out of which I managed to gather that he was saying Dom Silva was a half-hour's march behind.

It had been a part of Yankton's plan to keep the advance guard in talk until the bulk of the column had come piling in. I waited until the road was filled with Arabs, and the slaves themselves were being herded close behind, and bent forward and touched the end of my fuse with a live coal, and then leaped for our rock-walled *bomba*.

"Back!" I yelled to Yankton. "Into the *bomba!* She's *a-boomin'!*"

And boom she did, just as the captain scrambled over the wall. The explosion rocked the hill, scattered the Arab advance guard in fragments about the sides of the *donga*, and sent the rest of them fleeing in terror down the slaver track—their manacled captives forgotten.

"Now!" I shouted to our men, letting drive at the same time with my rifle.

"Now!" shouted Yankton at the same

Digitized by Google

time, and from all around us came the irregular roll and rattle of our men, shooting.

This was the signal for our Twanda allies. Into the mass of fighting, clawing, screaming Arabs that jammed the road came flying arrows, hurtling rocks, and gleaming knives. And high above all other sounds rose the terrible battle cry of the savages.

There was not much fight in the Arabs. The shock of the explosion had shattered the nerve of those who escaped. Their panic communicated itself to others. In far less time than I have taken to tell it, that caravan of Dom Silva's was a shattered, broken thing, streaming wildly across the country, pursued by the now blood-hungry men of the Yellow God.

Some of the captive slaves had got free, and they immediately began freeing the others. And all, whether free, or still under the yoke, turned backward on their tracks, their faces set once more toward the Land of the Yellow God.

XV

IT WAS all over. Yankton and I met and silently shook hands. Old Wilkes came hobbling up.

"I didn't get a scratch!" he cackled. "Either of you two hurt?"

We shook our heads. Mum Tumbo came stalking through the heaps of Arab dead, his eyes blazing with the light of battle, his spear and spear arm hideous things to behold.

"Dom Silva has escaped, *bwana*," he announced. "He left the caravan four days ago, and with him went the palanquins with the gold."

Yankton looked at me.

"Got wind that we were close on his track, no doubt," he said. "Thought he'd make his escape with the gold no matter what happened to his men and the slaves."

"Hope he won't try to take the *Dancing Sue* with him," said Wilkes. "I think we'd better get back to the bark as soon as God and the jungle'll let us."

We did. It was a very small caravan that started shortly after noon of that day on the last lap of the march back to the *Dancing Sue*. Our Twanda warriors had all left us in pursuit of the Arabs, and, later, to follow the freed captives. We had lost three more of our Kroo men in the battle just finished, so that now, compared with the large number that had started out from the land of the Yellow God, our line looked slim indeed.

It was a miserable march. I felt acutely sorry for Yankton. He had gambled his all on this venture. Men could not outfit for months of travel in the interior of Africa on a pittance. And Billings' money, too, had gone into the undertaking, and I felt that Billings was the sort of man who would lay all the blame of his own loss on the captain. I had yet to know Billings.

Yankton said nothing of his shattered hopes. Neither did he speak of Dom Silva.

"The poor skipper," said Wilkes when he was where Yankton couldn't hear him. "I'd give my other lamp if we could catch Dom Silva yet—jist because of the skipper."

And not a word from Wilkes about his own disappointment.

At last we were on familiar ground. About noon of the sixth day after the battle we topped a rise from which we could see the lagoon, and there, as jaunty and sweet a sight as ever I saw, was the *Dancing Sue*, the Stars and Stripes floating bravely in a little breeze.

An hour later we stood on the bank of the lagoon and hailed Billings to send us a boat. He heard us and came out on the poop-deck waving and dancing like a tipsy barrel.

"Well!" he gasped, stamping with impatience and delight as we drew up to the bark in the boat old Jenkins had brought to us. "Glad to see you back. Glad to see you. Every night used to pray God to fetch you safe, fetch you safe. And now you're here. Where's the donkeys—the donkeys? All the men safe? Did you find the gold?"

"We lost eleven of our men and we left the donkeys behind," said Yankton.

Billings stopped his capering and said soberly:

"You missed the gold, captain. Ne'er mind. Tell me when you get rested. You need a heap o' rest—a heap o' rest."

Not one word about his own lost pounds and shillings. I was beginning to get a new light on Billings. A man can be a man even if he does look like a tub, and turn sick and pasty at the thought of battle.

"You must have hot baths, the three of you," he said, bustling about and getting the baths ready on the main deck.

We had our baths and then went below

Digitized by Google

to change. When I came out into the cuddy, clean, shaved, cool and comfortable for the first time in nearly ten weeks, I was minus the beard that had caused Mum Tumbo to call me the Man with the Face of the Yellow God—and I've never worn it since.

Yankton and the first mate were in the cuddy. They grinned when they saw my face.

"Hello, youngster!" said my captain. Then he became serious.

"We didn't make it a minute too soon, Caleb," he added. "Billings tells me he saw an Arab hanging about the mouth of the lagoon yesterday. We're going to get out of this trap at once. Better get out on deck, both of you. Yank up the mudhook and we'll start dropping down the stream."

In an hour from the time the order was given the *Dancing Sue* had been sprung around with a kedge over her taffrail to head her down-stream, the anchor catted, and we were off. The river was now in flood from the heavy rains, and promised easy sailing.

"Give me the guts of it," begged Billings when Yankton had left us alone on the poop. "You must have had some terrible times."

Briefly as I could I sketched the adventures and failures of our trip, and ended with a word of sympathy for him that we had failed. He thrust his hands deep into the pockets of his tight-fitting trousers and said:

"When I was a lad my mother used to tell me that it never would hurt me to do without something I'd never had. I've never had any of the gold of the Yellow Gods—never had any of it."

"But what about your own money you've sunk in this thing?" I blurted out.

"I put it in to win or lose," he answered. "I lost—that's all."

And after that he spoke of something else.

It had taken us three days of toil to ascend the river to the lagoon. It took us little more than twelve hours to race back to the bay.

Shortly before four bells the next morning the *Dancing Sue* poked her nose around the point and headed for the blue of the Indian Ocean that opened out of the green of the bay.

Captain Yankton went below for a wash and a shave, something he never missed if he could help it. Billings and I were on the poop when, without warning, there swung around from behind a small, tree-covered cape two large fighting *dhows*, their sails puffed out like the cheeks of a boy blowing bubbles and their decks crowded with men.

"Dom Silva!" boomed Mum Tumbo, rising from his post on the main hatch and mounting to the poop.

I sprang to the open skylight and shouted below for the captain. He came stumbling up the ladder, his razor in one hand, the lather still thick on one side of his face. I pointed to the rail.

"There he is," I said. "Dom Silva."

A steely gleam came into his eyes.

"At last!" he said.

Then he went below and finished his toilet.

On the trip down the river all hands had been kept busy getting ready for just such an eventuality. Our men, hardened by weeks of roughing it, familiar with their weapons and now supremely confident, were gathered along the rails, fingering their guns and grinning with eager expectation.

Dubiously—for I feared that Dom Silva could not be caught twice in the same trap—I had prepared two large bombs, using heavy iron pots this time instead of tin kettles. Moreover, I had tamped the powder good and hard and entered the fuse through a tube of tin which I banked into the spout of the iron pot with wetted paper to serve as a wad. These bombs were now in the scuppers near the main shrouds, awaiting the moment of opportunity.

The *dhows* crept up to within two or three cable-lengths of us and then, suddenly, the one in the lead let fly with a couple of four-pounders she had mounted on her forecastle head.

We had no means of replying, so we had to take this silently, merely heading the *Dancing Sue* a point or two closer to the wind and bracing her yards to get a little more speed.

"Better stand by with those bombs of yours," said Captain Yankton. "We're likely to need them soon."

Up to the main yard I climbed without further hint, carrying the heavy things with me. Lying face downward on the yard, as before, and holding on with my legs, I made the bombs fast with spun yarn.

The foresail hid me from the *dhow* ahead of us, but I could see Dom Silva's craft, with Dom Silva himself, in white, standing well aft, drawing nearer and nearer to us and

Digitized by Google

firing at our defenseless sides with the regularity of a man-o'-war.

"Stand by, Dabney!" came a hail from the poop deck.

Startled, I glanced ahead. We were overhauling the other *dhow* and gaining fast. She tried to avoid us, firing desperately with cannon and small arms. Shots buzzed about me like a swarm of bees.

XVI

WE CRAWLED alongside the *dhow* ahead of us, just grazing her rail. Our men were now taking part in the fight, and a storm of lead was flying into the thronged decks of the Arab vessel. It seemed ages to me before I was even with the towering poop and felt the fire concentrated upon me. The slugs the Arabs used to load their cumbersome guns hummed and drummed about me, cutting the sail above my head into ribbons.

I puffed hard on my pipe, ready to touch the glowing coal to the end of the fuse, and above the booming of the guns I heard my captain's command—

"Now, Mr. Dabney, let her go!"

I cut, and the two iron pots pitched downward onto the deck of the *dhow*. Then an Arab did an heroic thing. Leaping from the shelter of the poop to which our fire had driven him and his companions, he seized one of the kettles, lifted it above his head and was about to heave it on to our own deck when the thing exploded in his hands, rocking the *dhow* and the *Dancing Sue* with the blast.

Like an awful echo came the roar of the second bomb.

The disabled *dhow* lurched drunkenly for a hundred yards or so, her head falling off before the wind as her tiller banged to and fro, untended. And then some smoldering fragment must have reached her powder magazine, for there came a great puff of black smoke, an ear-splitting crash, and the vessel vanished. There is no other word for it. She was gone—wiped off the top of the bay as a sum in arithmetic is wiped clean from a boy's slate.

Hating the Arabs as I did and knowing that it had been our lives or theirs that must go—even so, I turned sick at this sudden obliteration of so many men.

"Lay down from the main yard, Mr. Dabney."

The captain's voice was calm and cool. It steadied me, and I worked my way back to the deck where I found Yankton with a handkerchief tied about a bleeding cut under his right eye.

The starboard bulwark of the *Dancing Sue* had been caved in by the force of the explosion of the *dhow's* magazine, and mangled bodies, some of them our own blacks, lay here and there on the deck.

Steadily as minute guns the four-pounders on Dom Silva's craft kept banging away at us, sending solid shot through bulwark and planking.

"He'll have us riddled if this keeps up," said Yankton. "We've got to board that *dhow*, and do it quick."

The *dhow* had been footing it with the *Dancing Sue*, having the weather gage of us, and her men were hauling taut the halliards that raised her aft sail.

"We'll settle this thing at sea, where I belong," muttered the captain, and down went the wheel of the *Dancing Sue*, round flew her nose, and, leaving Dom Silva almost astern, we shot directly for the channel over the bar.

Past the bar some of our best men were sent aloft to repair the damage to standing and running gear done by the *dhow's* bombardment. By the time this was finished, Dom Silva was close upon us, evidently under the impression that we were seeking to escape.

And so we were, but not by running away.

With the *dhow* less than a half-mile astern, Captain Yankton jibed the *Dancing Sue* so that she lost way. Three times he did this, and always so skilfully that it did not show that it was done with a purpose. Her condition aloft gave color to this maneuver. The foreyard had been splintered and there was a great, ugly gash not far from the foot of the mainmast. It was a wonder how the mast held.

At last the moment Captain Yankton had been watching for, came. The *dhow*, hardly two cable-lengths astern and slightly to leeward, was just where he wanted her.

Round spun the *Dancing Sue* to run like a witch down upon the startled slaver, which had thought us bagged for good. Trusting in the superior strength of our hull, Yankton launched her full at the side of the *dhow*.

Digitized by Google

If he had struck it would have been ended then and there, but Dom Silva was a clever sailorman. His clumsy craft hung for a second in the wind, then paid off just in time to dodge the end-on blow and allow us to come rasping alongside.

"Now, men!" shouted our captain. "Give 'em ——, and then board her with your knives!"

A shattering volley from the decks of the *Dancing Sue* followed this command, and before the *dhow* could surge past us some of our men tossed onto her deck a spare anchor made fast to a cable. It caught under a bollard and held her firmly alongside.

I had seized a cutlas and with a single leap landed on the poop of the *dhow*, face to face with Dom Silva himself.

"Ha!" he yelled. "The strong boy who throws men overboard for sport! Come on, strong boy. We'll see how you can fight with things that cut."

For answer I lunged toward him. But the cutlas is not a rapier. Dom Silva parried, and I saw that he knew something of fencing. He slashed viciously at my head. I dodged this, and then we went to it, hammer and tongs, until we were both breathing in gasps, and bleeding from numerous small cuts.

And then Dom Silva laid my left arm open to the bone.

Once more I cut down and caught the half-caste across the upper muscle of his right arm. It was a clumsy stroke, but effective. His weapon fell to the deck, and he sprang past me with a frenzied scream and leaped down the ladder to his cabin beneath the poop deck.

After him I went, the taste of blood bitter and salt in my mouth.

I found him bending over a tarpaulin-covered heap on the floor of the cabin. He faced me with a snarl, and then, looking past me, his eyes dilated horribly, like the eyes of a man suddenly gone mad, and he turned and sprang for the stern window, and plunged out and down.

A howl of rage filled the cabin, and Mum Tumbo's long, black, naked body shot past me to the window.

And then, high above all other sounds, came the shriek of a man in mortal agony.

"The sharks," said Mum Tumbo, turning from the window. "They have defeated me."

And even in that mad moment I recalled the negro's savage wish in the cavern of the Yellow God for some punishment more horrible than death to overtake Dom Silva.

Exhausted from loss of blood and physically sick with the thought of what had just happened overside, I sank down against the bumpy, tarpaulin-covered mass just as Yankton, Wilkes and Jennings came racing into the cabin to my aid.

"Where's Dom Silva?" said my captain.

I pointed to the stern window. They all rushed to it and looked down. Mum Tumbo muttered something, and they all looked back at me.

"He's left nothing behind him but a swirl of foam," said Yankton.

"And this," I added weakly, and rolled off my bumpy, uncomfortable seat, taking the tarpaulin with me.

And there, in lumps and blocks and slivers, heaped up around the heavy idol from the sacred cave, lay the gold of the Yellow Gods!

Digitized by Google

RED BLOOD AND WHITE

by Frederick R Bechdolt

Author of "Tascosa," "The Law-Bringers," etc.

ON THE May morning when this tale begins Parker's Fort was a lonely landmark on the Texas prairie, a log stockade surrounded by a wilderness of grassland, whose gentle undulations stretched away and away like the rolling ocean to the meeting place of earth and sky. A dark line of brush and timber betrayed the windings of the Navasota River across the heaven-bounded circle of pale green.

The fort stood near the stream's headwaters, sixty miles from the nearest settlement. Nine families lived within its heavy walls, thirty-eight souls. They had come here from Illinois three years before—Elder John Parker and his aged wife; five married sons and daughters with their broods and Benjamin a bachelor; most of the others were relatives by marriage or distant kin.

At sunrise this morning the double gates swung open, breaking one of the log square's rigid sides. Ten men and boys came forth. Their faces were burned dark by sun and wind; their hair, docked in the frontier fashion, hung thick about their ears. Most of them were dressed in sap-dyed homespun, but here and there a garment of smoke-tanned buckskin stood out in contrast to the gray-brown weave. Some were carrying sacks of seed corn and others bore heavy old-style hoes. There was scarcely one but had a muzzle-loading rifle in his hand. The rays of the newly risen sun glinted on the long barrels of the weapons as the group walked to the fields that lay more than a mile away.

So they departed on this morning of May 19th, 1836, leaving five able-bodied men in the stockade to guard the women and children. The sun climbed in the eastern sky; the elders went about their work within the loopholed rectangle of logs; the youngsters played. Among them was Cynthia Ann Parker, a girl of nine. This is her story and the story of the son who came to her in later years.

At nine o'clock a woman cried out, and there was that in her voice which brought the men from the cabins on a run. She stood in the middle of the enclosure pointing through the open gateway. Less than half a mile away six hundred Comanche Indians were riding toward the fort.

Now while the mothers gathered their children at the cabin doors the five men got their rifles and hurried to the entrance. They were about to close the double gates when the Comanches halted and a solitary rider came on before them. He bore an upraised lance from which a patch of white cloth was fluttering in the morning breeze.

"I'll go out and talk with him," Benjamin Parker told the others.

Cynthia's father, Silas Parker, shook his head.

"Better," he said, "to close the barrier at once."

The two brothers argued for a moment and then Benjamin had his way. He was

"Red Blood and White," copyright, 1922, by F. R. Bechdolt.

Digitized by Google

a frontier Baptist preacher and they were a devout people. Once every week since they had been here in the wilderness he had held services. They all looked up to him. His words had weight. So now he went to meet the messenger.

The other four bided in the open gateway. Behind them they could hear the women bidding the smaller children to hush; occasionally they caught the voice of Elder John Parker as he moved among the mothers trying to soothe their fears. His years were approaching the four-score mark, and ever since he was a boy back in Virginia he had been close to hostile savages. But his arm was not so steady as it used to be, and he had to leave the sighting of the rifles to the younger men.

The conference out there on the prairie lasted for some minutes. Then the Comanche rode back to his companions and Benjamin Parker returned to the quartette before the stockade.

"They say that they are peaceful," he told them, "and they want to know the way to a water-hole that used to be near here. But I don't like the look of things."

He went on to describe the band; the lack of squaws, the bare bodies of the warriors, the weapons which betrayed themselves at every movement in the close packed ranks.

"I'll go again," he said at length, "and if they mean trouble, I'll see if I can't persuade them to pass on by."

His brother Silas seized him by the arm and pleaded with him to stay. There was still time to close the gates, he maintained. But the other walked out across the prairie with his hand uplifted in the sign of peace.

The Comanches were already advancing slowly as he came toward them and several warriors rode on ahead to meet him. They reined in their ponies forming a circle around him. Then the blade of a lance flashed in the sunlight. The watchers saw the weapon plunging downward, and before Benjamin Parker had fallen the tight sod of the prairie was reverberating like a drumskin to the beating of racing hoofs. The shrill ululations of the war-whoop drowned the deeper undernote as the band swept toward the open gateway. In this manner the massacre at Parker's Fort began.

There was no time to close the gate now. The stockade had become a trap. The only hope for its inmates lay with the ten men who were at their work in the fields more than a mile away. While the parley was being held Elder John Parker, his aged wife and Mrs. Elizabeth Kellogg had come close behind the four men in the entrance. They set forth at once to seek help and before they had gone a hundred yards Sarah Nixon, a daughter of the old couple, started after them.

More than a mile and uneven footing; that would be a gruelling race for a young man. But they heard such sounds behind them as quickened their halting limbs and gave them breath. So they ran on and the hair of the heads of the aged pair gleamed like newly fallen snow in the morning sunshine; the locks of the women streamed in the wind. And when they had gone perhaps two-thirds of the distance Sarah Nixon passed the other three. Her husband was among the working-party in the fields. They saw her draw on ahead and vanish over one of those gentle rises which make the surface of the Texas prairie like the surface of the sea. Then they heard a yell that sounded nearer than the uproar by the stockade and the thudding of hoofs grew louder behind them. A dozen warriors swept down upon them.

The Comanches reined up their ponies. The gaudy pennons on their lances fluttered as the weapons rose. The blades descended and old John Parker fell dying from a dozen wounds. One of the braves dragged Mrs. Kellogg upon his pony, and while he was riding back toward the stockade with her she saw the others plunging their spears into Granny Parker's body.

The billow of the prairie that had hidden Mrs. Nixon from these hapless people kept her from the sight of the Comanches, and she stumbled on half-dead with weariness and fear. The yells died away behind her. She saw the fields ahead. The men had dropped their hoes and were running toward her. She had breath enough to call the one word—

"Indians!"

WHEN Benjamin Parker died out on the prairie the other four men stood in the stockade's entrance awaiting the charge. They could at least delay the savages. The six hundred came on, a huddle of racing ponies and bronze bodies squirming in the sun; here and there the painted plumes of a war-bonnet tossed in the wind. The throbbing of the hoofs

Digitized by Google

swelled to a thunder; the war-yells became a deafening pandemonium. Then the four rifles cracked and the gateway was overhung by a thin cloud of powder smoke. The oncoming ranks wavered. Firearms were formidable weapons in the eyes of the Indians at that time. A quartet of riderless ponies broke away from the forefront and there was something in the sight that made the others pull rein. The white men fell back to reload.

And then Silas Parker saw his sister, Rachel Plummer, running by him with her baby in her arms. Her husband was in the fields; there was no hope here; it is possible she thought to slip away in the confusion of the coming attack. But she never had a chance. She passed out through the gateway and a dozen naked warriors clapped their heels to their ponies, charging down upon her. Parker clubbed his rifle and rushed among them, and he made so fierce a fight of it in the center of the yelling pack that they held up the whole advance for several minutes before they killed him. Then one of the braves took the woman prisoner, and the rest of them crowded into the stockade.

Of the three who had stood with Silas Parker two died somewhere near the gateway. The other escaped with his wife and little ones. The Comanches spread through the enclosure seeking such plunder as they could find.

Now that the fighting was over every buck in the war-party was intent on spoils. They paid small heed to what was going on about them, but rushed into the cabins, dragging forth everything they could lay their hands on, wrestling with one another over loot. It was all monstrous confusion, and the women were seizing the opportunity to slip away with their children to the open prairie.

Cynthia's mother, Lucy Parker, with her two babies was among the first to leave. She had four little ones—two babies, Cynthia and six-year-old John. They had gone something less than a half mile when they got sight of L. D. Nixon running toward them from the fields. But he came unarmed, and before any of the others were in sight a number of Comanches who were on the lookout for fugitives, caught up with the little group. They forced the mother to lift John and Cynthia behind one of the mounted warriors, and those on foot took Lucy Parker back with them to the fort.

Soon afterward the rest of the men came from the fields. Were not this the story of Cynthia Ann Parker the tale of what followed at the fort would be well worth telling in detail; how David Faulkenberry rescued Lucy Parker and her two babies from a score of Comanches; how he and two companions held back the savages while the women and children slipped away to the brush in the river-bottom; how they found old Granny Parker that night living in spite of her wounds and carried her back to the settlement where she died within the month.

In the hamlets by the Trinity these survivors waited for some tidings from the prisoners. Six months later they got the first word. A band of Delawares, who had purchased Mrs. Kellogg, brought her into Nacogdoches and turned her over to President Sam Houston. A year later William Donoho, a Sante Fé trader, found Mrs. Plummer with some Comanches away up in Colorado and ransomed her. Along in the fifties news came from Cynthia's brother John. He had grown up among his captors and had become a warrior. In a raid down across the Rio Grande they took a Mexican girl prisoner, Juanita Espinosa was her name. The white youth fell in love with her and soon afterward was stricken with smallpox; whereat the tribe deserted him. But the girl stayed by him, nursing him back to health, and the two made their way to the white settlements.

Meantime the seasons passed. Lucy Parker died. The two babies whom she had saved from the Comanches that May morning in 1836 grew up; and one of them, Dan Parker, became a member of the legislature. But, save for some scraps of information brought by Indian traders who told stories of having seen a white girl among the Quahada Comanches, no word came of Cynthia Ann Parker. Her story spread. There was no town in Texas where it was not told.

IN THE Summer of 1860 the Comanche tribes formed a confederation to drive the white people from the Brazos and near-by streams. They swept down from the north and west, raiding outlying ranches, slaying settlers, running off the stock. Nearly every able-bodied man in that part of Texas took his rifle and saddled up his pony to go out

Digitized by Google

against them. Among these defenders was young Lawrence Sullivan Ross.

Sul Ross they called him. In after years he attained distinction as a brigadier general under the stars and bars, and later he became Governor of Texas; but his taste always ran rather to books than to war or politics, and he ended his days as a college president. At the time of this tale he was just graduated from an Alabama university. His father before him had been a famous ranger and had slain the great Comanche chief, Big Foot, in a hand-to-hand combat out on the Llano Estacado, and when the son was at home during vacations it was his custom to spend his time fighting Indians.

At the close of his sophomore year he had commanded a band of friendly warriors in a battle on the False Washita where they had slain more than ninety Comanches. So in this Summer of 1860 he came back home with his diploma and got permission from Governor Sam Houston to raise a company of rangers.

He enrolled sixty men, and they went into camp near Fort Belknap on the old Brazos agency to spend the rest of the Summer and the Autumn bushwhacking after small hostile bands. Then when Winter was beginning, the Quahada Comanches made a bloody raid in Jack and Palo Pinto Counties and Sul Ross took his rangers to pick up their trail.

These Quahadas were the wildest and most elusive of their nation. The name means Antelope Eaters, and they got it because they spent most of their time roaming over the Llano Estacado. Their chief was Peta Nocona—in English, The Wanderer—the most famous of the Comanches since old Big Foot's time.

Young Captain Ross left twenty of his rangers to guard the neighborhood and took twenty dragoons of the Second U. S. Cavalry to replace them. With this mixed company of sixty he set forth and cut the trail of the fleeing Quahadas somewhere near the clear fork of the Brazos. It led them to the northward, and they left the last settlements behind them; they came into the country which lies under the escarpments of the Staked Plains. This was Comanche Land.

On the morning of December 18th, 1860, they were traveling up the Pease River in the face of a biting north wind. Great clouds of dust came sweeping down on them, hiding all the landscape for long intervals. Now and then there was a rift for a moment or two and they got a brief glimpse of the dreary sand-hills with the gnarled shrubs at their summits dancing contortedly to the humming of the gale. Two or three times they saw bunches of buffalo running clumsily before the wind.

Most men, even in those days when reading signs was as necessary in one's education as reading print, would have taken it for granted that the bison were hunting shelter from the norther, but the newly fledged graduate was as thorough a scholar in savage warfare as he was in his Latin; and it occurred to him that the brutes were loping too fast to be merely drifting. It looked as if they had sighted Indians and stampeded. So he told Tom Kellihier, his lieutenant, to hold the company here on the lowlands.

"I'm going up on that hill to reconnoiter," he said.

And when he reached the summit he saw the conical teepees of a Comanche village a few hundred yards ahead of them.

That was always one of the weak points with the Plains Indians, their disposition to relax their vigilance and huddle in their blankets during bad weather. Sul Ross got his big chance on this bitter December morning just as Crook and Miles and other famous generals got their opportunities, by being abroad when the weather was unfit for traveling. So now he hurried down the hill, thanking his stars he had climbed it, and organized his attack without a moment's loss of time.

He sent a sergeant and the twenty dragoons by a roundabout course through the sand-hills to the opposite side of the camp where they were to lie in ambush until the others charged. Then he waited with the forty rangers and, when the soldiers had time to reach their position, he gave the word.

They swept down on the village on the dead run and they were right among the lodges before the Comanches knew what had happened. Now squaws shrieked. Dogs and children scuttled under the hoofs of the ponies; the voice of the braves rose in the shrill war-yells, and the rattle of the Texans' rifles came sharp and dry above the uproar. It was more like a massacre than a battle. Many of the Comanche warriors died while reaching for their weapons. Others fled

Digitized by Google

fairly into the arms of the waiting dragoons.

Then the survivors scattered; it was every man for himself. Those who had managed to get their horses struck off for the sand-hills and the affair resolved itself into a series of pursuits. Young Captain Ross found himself racing after a pony which bore two riders. In spite of its double load it was showing good speed, and the Texan was settling down in his saddle to ride deep in the long chase across broken country, when he got a glimpse of his lieutenant, Tom Kellihier, pursuing a Comanche whose mount and blanket were much better than the others. In the next moment the sand-hills shut him off from all save the pair whom he was following.

The horses lined out to a long steady stride. The gale came down upon them from the north. Great clouds of yellow sand filled the air like clouds of smoke when the prairie is aflame. Ross bent his head against the flaying particles. The two riders before him showed through the saffron haze, swathed in their blankets, leaning far forward. So they sped on among the smoking hillocks and gradually the bigger boned bronco gained on the pony with its double load.

When they had gone about three quarters of a mile and there was less than twenty yards between them, Ross raised his big cap-and-ball revolver, threw down and fired. The blankets fluttered wildly; the form of the rear rider collapsed. It was a girl. His bullet had killed her.

As she fell she dragged the other from his seat. The man alighted catlike on his feet. In the instant his bow was out, an arrow on the string.

Now as he charged Ross fired again but missed. The Comanche's arrow struck his horse, and the bronco began bucking as wildly as an unbroken colt.

The Texan sat his pitching mount and strove to get another shot, but such rough riding does not go well with good marksmanship, and to complicate matters still further the Indian was making the most of his opportunity. Three of his arrows buzzed by before young Ross let the established rules go by the board and gripped the saddle-horn to steady himself. Then he pulled the trigger. It was only a snap shot at that, but it broke the warrior's arm. Before he could throw his lance Ross had two bullets through his body.

There was a little tree near the summit of a sand-hill and when Ross had managed to dismount from his frenzied horse the Comanche was walking slowly toward it. He dragged himself the last few steps and leaned against the trunk facing his slayer. His head went back; he began chanting his death-song.

The bitter gale flung great clouds of yellow sand about him. The blood stains spread over his bare torso. He held his jet-black eyes on the white man while his voice rose above the wind's droning, chanting his deeds, the greatness of his people. Those people were scattered in flight now; he was alone; a solitary figure, swaying with weakness; but defiant to the very last.

And while he sang, a Mexican who had been a captive with the Comanches and knew their tongue, rode up.

"He is Pete Nócona," the man said, "their chief."

"Tell him," Ross ordered, "to surrender, and that we will not harm him."

But when the Mexican spoke the words the Comanche thrust so fiercely with his lance that the two men fell back a step. And so he died, and Ross went back to gather up his company.

He found his lieutenant, Tom Kellihier, cursing with Texan fluency.

"Look what I got," he growled and pointed to the captive. "A squaw!" He told of his own long chase and how, when he was about to fire, the fugitive had lifted a baby from her blankets, holding it forth in supplication.

"That's not a squaw, Tom," Ross told him. "Indians don't have blue eyes. That's a white woman."

"Her name," the Mexican interpreter told them, "is Prelock. Wife of the chief you killed."

"Well anyhow she's white," Ross maintained. "Look at the color of her eyes. And she's weeping. A Comanche woman wouldn't let you see her do that."

"She is weeping for her son, *señor*," the Mexican went on when he had talked further with her. "She fears she will never see him again."

That evening by the camp-fire the young captain heard her sobbing and he called the interpreter to question her. She was the widow of the chief; of her three children one had died with the father; she had the youngest here, her baby, Prairie Flower.

Digitized by Google

But the boy had been separated from them in the fighting and had gone she did not know whither. She mourned for him. Ross bade the Mexican question her about her past; who were her people; how long she had been among the Comanches. She talked intelligently, but she could tell them little. Of her family's name she had no memory. She had lived with this tribe ever since she was a little girl. She did not know a word of English. Save for a few faint scraps of memory, she was all Indian. Ross listened carefully and compared such data as she had given to those facts which he, like all Texans, knew; and they agreed so well that he began to be convinced.

"I believe," he told Tom Kellihier, "she's Cynthia Ann Parker." So, when he returned from the expedition he sent her to Camp Cooper where there were women to look after her and he left directions that Colonel Isaac Parker, an uncle of the missing girl, be summoned to identify her. One day the old man came from his home in Weatherford and had a long talk with her through an interpreter. But he could get nothing from her to show who she was. When he had labored for two hours or so he gave it up and was turning away to go. Then he tried a last resort.

"The girl I seek," he said slowly to the interpreter, "is Cynthia Ann."

She straightened up and patted her breast.

"Cynthia Ann!" she cried and smiled. "Cynthia Ann!"

She had forgotten the name of her family, but the memory of her given name had abided with her.

Soon afterward they took her to her brother. Colonel Dan Parker was in Austin at the time as a delegate to the secession convention. On the day when they brought her to the capital this body was debating the question of Texas leaving the Union; and when she saw the assemblage in the State House she thought it was a gathering of great chiefs deciding on her fate, as the Comanche head-men used to do when there were prisoners. So she tried to flee and in spite of all they could do to soothe her fears, she was trembling like a trapped animal when they gave her to her brother.

He took her to his home, and the women made much of her. Very slowly her fears departed; the customs of the white people began to replace the Comanche ways; she learned to speak her native tongue once more. But they had much trouble with her; for her heart was out on the Llano Estacado with her boy, and she was continually trying to escape that she might go and find him.

She lived but four years and her baby Prairie Flower died before her. It was in the Summer of 1864, that she passed away, and even after she was taken down with her last sickness she used to voice the hope that, when the white people were done with their own warfare, they might yet find her boy and bring him to her.

NOW the tale turns to the boy for whom her heart ached so sorely during the last years of her life.

Quanah was his name—Fragrance of Flowers. They say half-breeds are never any good. His strange life proves that the old saying is a fallacy.

The Comanches had no hereditary succession of chiefs. They chose their leaders for themselves. So when Pete Nocona died that day, singing his death-song in the sand-hills, and when Prelock was taken by the white men, young Quanah became a waif. He lived on the tribe's charity.

But the democracy of custom which left him a pauper gave him equality of opportunity; he grew up among the other boys and got the same schooling. He listened to the tales of the old men; legends of animals and birds; traditions of the Comanches dating back to the time when they separated from their Apache kin to rove over the country east of the Llano Estacado; stories of warfare with the bold Cheyennes up in the region of the Arkansas River. He learned to shoot and stalk the antelope, to ride after the marvelous fashion of his people who were the best horsemen of all the Indians. Hunting and horse-stealing and warfare—he studied to prepare himself for all three of them, and the traditions of his father's race soaked into him until they became a part of his nature. He grew on toward manhood, ambitious to make a name for himself as a great warrior.

It was in part that ambition and in part the good blood in his veins which made him excel from the beginning. The youngsters of the tribe were a company by themselves, owning their own leaders. He gained such prestige among them as gave him a good-sized group of admirers; and the allegiance

Digitized by Google

of these he held the more firmly because he owned a warmth of heart which in its turn begat affection. So he came to his young manhood in the late sixties with twenty firm friends who boasted of his skill and were ready to do anything he asked of them.

Then, just about two years after his mother died mourning for him, something happened which gave him opportunity to put that friendship to its test—and make his way toward mightier things than hunting or horse-racing.

There was a girl among the Quahadas, Weckeah, the daughter of Yellow Bear, a chief. She and Quanah had been playmates when they were little ones and close companions in these later days. One evening the budding warrior learned that his companionship had ripened into love.

A young buck, Tannap, whose father was like hers a chief, came courting Weckeah at twilight after the Comanche fashion. He sat down outside old Yellow Bear's tepee and played love-songs on a reed flute. The girl did not show her face, but when the serenade was done and young Quanah, who had heard it, came to her with eyes ablaze, she acknowledged her love for him.

Twice afterward the ardent Tannap repeated his visit; and on the fourth night Eckitoap, his father, came. Yellow Bear sat down with him on a buffalo-robe outside the teepee and received the formal offer for his daughter's hand. Ten ponies was the figure, which was a big price in those days.

All of which the girl told Quanah that same evening. They met near the edge of the village, and she was weeping when she sought him out there in the moonlight; but whispering and love talk never were known to raise a band of ponies, and young Quanah did not waste much time in comforting the maiden, but set off to find his friends.

Before midnight he had gathered a dozen of them together and he put the proposition to them. He had one horse, a good one; if they would furnish the others he would repay them as soon as he was able to steal enough. They brought him all they had, and among the lot were nine which like his were fit to match the bid of his rival's father.

But old Eckitoap had a spy at work among the young men and when Quanah brought his string of ponies to Yellow Bear's tepee the chief had doubled his bid. Yellow Bear had accepted that offer. The deal was closed. In three days, according to the tribal ritual, Tannap would come and take Weckeah away as his bride.

That night there was another meeting of the lovers and Quanah, who had been busy with his youthful followers in the mean-time, bade the girl to come at moon-down to a rendezvous outside the village. They would elope—and as for the rest, why he had plans which she could see for herself when the time came. It meant his death if they were overtaken, and she would go to Tannap in disgrace.

When the moon had set—it was within an hour of midnight—she stole out to the appointed place and found Quanah waiting with two ponies. As she mounted hers a number of dim forms appeared from a little draw near by. The soft scuffle of hoofs sounded and she counted twenty horsemen. As they set off across the prairie, her lover told her that his friends were going where they went. He was their leader now. They had left the tribe.

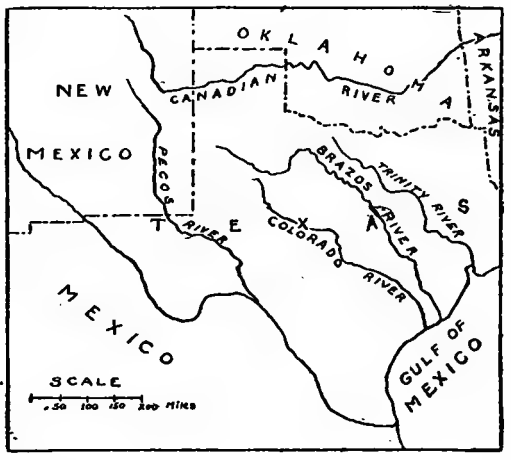
So they rode away in the darkness, slowly at first lest the sound of the hoof-falls might betray them; and when they were beyond earshot of the village they pressed on to a lope. They kept this pace for seven hours and never slackened save to water their ponies in crossing a stream. When the sun was rising they stopped and let the horses graze while they ate the jerked buffalo meat which they had brought with them. They rested for a few hours and now when they set forth they went in pairs. Each of these couples took a separate direction. Thus they killed their trail after the fashion which their elders had taught them.

That night they met at a spot which Quanah had appointed and rested until the moon was down. They journeyed southward now into the state of Texas and hung to the edges of the Llano Estacado until they reached Double Mountain down in Scurry County where they separated again and made their way in couples to the headwaters of the Concho River.

Here where the Llano Estacado rises from the lowlands in sheer bluffs they built their village and went to work at making their living by stealing horses. During the next few months they raided all over western Texas, driving their stolen herds across the Staked Plains and selling them for good

Digitized by Google

prices to the Comancheros who came from Taos and Santa Fé to traffic with them by the banks of the Canadian. They prospered under Quanah's leadership and, although



they had some brisk brushes with ranchmen and rangers, they lost only two or three men.

During these days every now and then one of the band would steal back to the Quahadas; and when the young warrior returned he always brought with him a bride. Also he usually came accompanied by three or four bucks of his own age whom he had lured away from the parent tribe by his tales of raiding. Within the year these accessions had swelled the number of Quanah's followers to somewhere above a hundred.

By this time, naturally enough, the news of the seceders' whereabouts had leaked out in the Quahada village and one day old Eckitoap set forth with a formidable band of warriors to bring back the fugitives to justice.

The tidings of Eckitoap's coming preceded him and on the morning when he reached Quanah's camp he found the latter's men awaiting him in their war-paint. He and his fellow chiefs took one look at the opposing force; they were astounded at its number; and the idea of being thrashed in a battle against the youngsters who had grown up in their own village appealed to them so little that they sent forward a herald asking for a parley.

The conference was held and it was agreed that Quanah should pay nineteen ponies as damages. He turned the horses over, remarking as he did so that he knew a ranch where he could steal as many more the next night. When the ceremonial of feasting and smoking by which the treaty was fatified was completed both bands rode back northward together, and Quanah took his place among his father's people as a full-fledged chief.

They say he was the finest-looking man in all the tribe; tall, straight and well proportioned, darker than many warriors, and with that dignity in his features which marks the higher types of North American Indian. From head to foot he was all savage and during the next few years he showed himself the most relentless of leaders among the southwestern nations in warfare against the white men.

It was about the time this was going on that General Hancock brought about the Medicine Lodge treaty of 1868, by which the Cheyennes, Kiowas, Apaches, Arapahoes and most of the Comanches agreed to keep the peace provided there was no buffalo hunting south of the Arkansas River. Quanah had risen to the head chief of the Quahadas, and his influence had much to do with their remaining outside that alliance.

So now while the other nations were varying the monotony of eating the white man's beef by semi-occasional excursions off their reservations during which they added to their collections of white scalps, he remained consistent in his hostility against his mother's people. He took his tribe out on the Llano Estacado, and his warriors ranged about the edges of the great plateau, raiding outlying ranches, massacring a few buffalo hunters, retreating before the advances of cavalry or Texas Rangers into the wild arid reaches over toward the Pecos River. The greatest war-chief the Comanches had ever known; so men called him. And then, when he had risen to this height among the warriors of his father's race, events took a strange turn with him.

IN THE Summer of 1873 a party of buffalo hunters crossed the Arkansas River and scouted over the forbidden land to the southward. Early the next Spring a wagon-train left Dodge City, Kansas, and by the time the young grass was getting strong the members of the expedition had built the hamlet of

Digitized by Google

Adobe Walls near the Canadian in the northeastern portion of the Panhandle. From this outpost the hide hunters went forth to establish camps and slay the bison herds.

Then the tribes of the southwest united in their last great outbreak. It was the Quahada Comanches who kindled the flame that swept through southwestern Kansas into Colorado, from the Indian Territory down into Texas and New Mexico.

A medicine-man—I-sa-tai was his name—proclaimed that he had been given divine power by which he could make the guns of the white men impotent. Emissaries went to the other tribes with the tidings. They found the Cheyennes, who had once been their enemies, in camp near the head of the Washita River, and offered them the pipe which they accepted. So the flower of the Comanche warriors, who had united under Quanah, came now for council.

They came decked out in the full panoply of war. Their ponies were bedizened with paint, festooned with scalps and eagle feathers. The riders wore gaudy warbonnets, and their bare bodies were streaked and patched with red and yellow. I-sa-tai rode at their head, and four chiefs were beside him. They charged down on the Cheyenne village yelling the shrill warwhoop of their nation; they circled round it and rode in and out among the tepees. The Cheyennes mounted their ponies and went through a series of like maneuvres.

Then the chiefs sat down together in council and they mapped out their campaign. There were many projects to be followed before they returned from the warpath, but the initial blow was to be delivered against that lonely outpost which the buffalo hunters had built at Adobe Walls. And of the chiefs who were to lead in this expedition, Quanah was chosen as the head-man.

There is no doubt that it was his campaign; that he had planned it and had sponsored it in councils of his own people, until it had become like a part of their religion. The medicine-man's revelation was but a part of the movement, which had originated with him. For he knew that the day had come when the issue must be decided; either the buffalo hunters must go or the Indians must subsist on the bounty of the white men.

So, when the warriors had danced all through the night and when the runners had gone forth to spread the news to the other tribes, the war-party left the Cheyenne village and traveled southward. And as they journeyed companies of fighting men from the Kiowas and Apaches overtook them; until their number had swelled to somewhere between eight hundred and a thousand, the pick of the Southwestern nations.

On the third evening they began the final preparations for the conflict. They daubed their ponies with paint and tricked them out with highly colored trappings; they smeared their faces and their bare bodies with ocher and vermillion. They made medicine according to their different rituals. Warriors brought out old charms and put them on with elaborate ceremonial. And every one of these details was attended to with regard to certain rigid formulæ which I-sa-tai had prescribed as applying to the expedition.

That night they went in camp down by the Canadian six or seven miles away from the hamlet at Adobe Walls, where twenty-eight men were sleeping secure in the belief that recent Indian alarms were but the result of a few roving renegades; that these had departed and there was now no great danger.

Before dawn the warriors were up and on their ponies. For the final time I-sa-tai had told them that the white men's guns would be useless—no better than so many sticks of wood. Now he climbed a hill near the camp and stood on its summit. Save for a bonnet of sage-stems he was stark naked. The light seeped over the eastern sky revealing his solitary figure. The warriors waited, biding the signal which he was to give them. The sun was nearly risen when he raised his arm.

Then they swept forward in a long line and afterward some of them told how their ponies' hoofs beat the prairie sod until the sound arose like rumbling thunder. So they charged down upon the four flimsy buildings where less than thirty men were gathered, one hundred and fifty miles from the nearest settlement. And when they came in sight of the hamlet they rent the morning air with one mighty triumphant war-whoop.

What followed is a white man's story, and it will be told in detail elsewhere. For that charge, which came thundering across the prairie, splendid and terrible, barbaric in its beauty, began a day which ended in

Digitized by Google

defeat for the eight hundred. How many of them died before the Sharp's rifles of the buffalo hunters is not known. The number was great enough to appal the boldest warriors of the southwestern tribes. Quanah was struck down by a spent bullet some time near noon, during one of the fierce onrushes which kept up until the sun was away past the meridian. His horse was killed and he was obliged to ride away from the stricken field behind one of his braves.

Late in the afternoon when the Indians had retreated down into the river-bottom a Cheyenne buck sought out I-sa-tai and started to pull him from his pony, announcing loudly his intention to flog the luckless medicine-man with his quirt.

"Oh, let him go," the other Cheyennes shouted.

And so in scorn they spared him.

Now the war-party split up; the Cheyennes struck off to the northward; the Comanches with some of the Kiowas and a few Apaches raided a number of buffalo hunters' camps and made their way to the Llano Estacado. General Miles came down from Dodge City with a formidable body of troops. In August he overtook the warriors somewhere near the Red River. It was a good fight. Before the troopers charged Captain Chaffee—in later years he became famous as a general—called out to his men,

"Forward, boys. The first man that gets killed, I'll make him a corporal."

In that spirit the soldiers went about the day's work and they scattered the Indians so thoroughly that there was no more unity among them. During the Fall and Winter Miles kept up his campaign, and in the Spring of 1875 Quanah found himself alone with his Quahadas on the Staked Plains. The rest of the Comanches had gone back to the reservations along with other tribes.

For another year Quanah kept his people out on the Llano waging a hopeless war against the soldiers and the buffalo hunters. He saw the wagons coming out into the land which had been a wilderness; and trading-posts were springing up where only savages had ventured in past years. It was all over. The old days were gone. He realized it. And in 1876 he led his Quahadas back to Fort Sill.

Up to this day he had been all Indian, but when he surrendered his tribe to General MacKenzie, he said,

"Now I can go and see my mother."

And from that time he remembered the white blood in his veins. He learned of the mother's death two years or so later. In the mean-time he had taken her name and henceforth he was known as Quanah Parker. When General Alford, who had often seen her, came up from Texas to Fort Sill, Quanah sought out the visitor and asked him many questions concerning her—What was she like? How did her voice sound? What was the color of her eyes?

There is something about that turning of his thoughts which is pathetic; it is like a wayward boy who comes back to his people after long wanderings and, entering the door, calls for his mother.

As the red strain had dominated him before, so now the white strain began to show itself more strongly. Quanah had been a great war-chief; Quanah Parker became a great leader in peace, canny in business, planning for his people's progress. Long before the time when the lands were given to them in allotments he had begun to direct them toward farming. When that day came he saw to it that they picked the best agricultural sections in their part of the country. As for himself, he prospered. He acquired cattle and horses and good fields; he built a house of thirty rooms near where the town of Parker stands today.

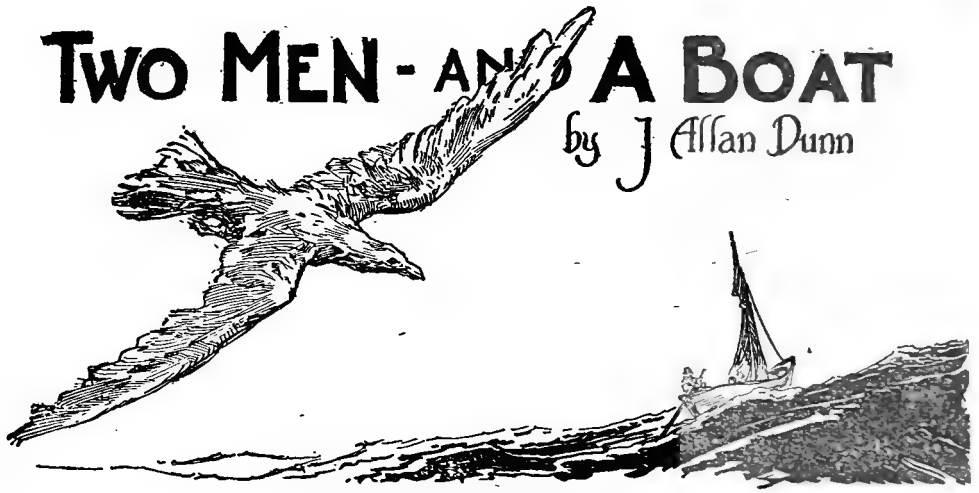
When President Roosevelt came West for his big wolf hunt Quanah Parker went with him as a guest. He was proud of that; proud of his possessions, of his great white house and the blooded horses which he owned. But the thing in which he took the greatest pride, to which he led such visitors of distinction as came to his home, was a painting of Cynthia Ann Parker which hung above the organ in the parlor.

And when he was free to come and go among the white men, he had her body brought to Oklahoma. He died in 1911 and was buried beside her. So in the end he came to her.

Digitized by Google

TWO MEN - AND A BOAT

by J Allan Dunn



Author of "Flotsam," "Crotons," etc.

THE heaving, seething sea seemed in rebellion against the inexorable law that water must seek its own level. The waves mounted perpetually in insurgent pyramids that rose, subsided, climbed again in constantly reforming ranks, hurrying *en echelon* to the far horizon under the imperative urge of the tide.

The wind, swooping and driving above the billows, broke the brittle crests, charging them with aeration, making them foam like oversped horses champing on the curb. It flung yeasty clots of spindrift flying ahead, frothy bubbles breaking into rays of iridescence under the sun, blazing high up toward the zenith.

On the dark blue surface the whaleboat rode buoyantly, jauntily, with a shouldering roll as it glided into purple hollows or lunged up the faceted slopes, liquid, yet, for the shifting moment, brilliant and hard as the flash of a jewel. Its white paint was blistered, its cordage make-shift, its remnant of canvas tattered, but it went on blithely as if purposefully bent to a happy harborage, impelled by the brave lug of its tiny sail, guided by the steering-oar thrust over the stern and the play of muscular but pliant wrists.

Apparently in mid-air, an albatross soared with only an occasional turn of its head and a glint of its jetty eye as it searched the living larder of the sea for appetizing food. Rarely, the steersman, glancing aloft, saw a flirt of pinions, a slight shift of its tail. It seemed to hang suspended while the earth rolled on its round beneath rather than actually to be moving, effortless, keeping pace with the boat.

The bird beheld a far-flung circle of heaving ocean from its windy aerie, a circle with but one conspicuous object, the weathered whaleboat buffeting along. It saw a whale spout and sound, saw the vague shadows of surface fish, the uprush of a dolphin, the frenzied leap and glide of blue-and-silver flying-fish. Still it soared serenely as if its duty was to follow the boat, to report progress, to await disaster or triumph. Above the albatross, arching the sea, lifted the dome of the sky in brilliant blue, the blue of limitless space, pitiless in its suggestion of infinity.

There were two men in the boat, the steersman upright in the stern, a man at the beginning of his prime; and one, who lay on the bottom boards, his back against a thwart in the scanty, mocking shadow of the sail, close to the end of his.

There had been seven, nineteen days since, when the whaleboat left the sinking schooner. The sea had suddenly risen and struck at the little ship, had beaten it as a man might strike at an insect crawling on his skin, irritated; then, losing reason, summoning the wind to aid, had battered and flung, had lifted up and slammed down, clutching, pounding, tearing until with a roar the tempest had passed on and left the survivors in the open boat, at the mercy of wind and wave, scantily provisioned,

"Two Men and a Boat," copyright, 1922, by J. Allan Dunn.

Digitized by Google

without chart or compass, a thousand sea miles from their destination, from any known land.

Four of them had been Polynesians, tall big, cheery children. At first they had fared the best with their brown skins while the white men turned scarlet, swollen and feverish under the sun and from the glare reflecting from the burnished water. Then there had come squalls and sodden flesh in which the blood ran sluggishly. Nights of constant threat, day after day that was barren of plume of smoke or gleam of sail, days that presently became barren of hope. The miserable rations shrank. The Welsh carpenter of the little expedition went mad from sunstroke and, his eyes glaring and curdy foam gathering in the corners of his broken-blistered lips, perched in the bows and chanted his national song in Cymric:

Ni chaiff gelyn ladd ac ymlid,
Harlech! Harlech! cwyd iw herlid;
Y mae Rhoddwr mawr cin Rhyddid,
Yu roi nert i ni!

When his voice failed him, Evans rose and plunged into the sea. It was running high and before the mate, not so swift as he had been, nor so strong, could bring about a rescue, a shark appeared from the depths and dragged the Welshman, too hoarse to utter shriek or sound, to where three more sea-wolves tore at his body and left the blue sea streaked for a while with crimson, oily stains.

From then on the four sharks played escort, gliding through the sea at steady range even as the albatross soared above. Their fins showed black by day, or silver, when the light broke on the wet surfaces and, after nightfall, four streaks of sea-fire marked the patrol. If they disappeared during a squall they reappeared immediately the seas went down, always in position, a little astern, two to starboard and two to port.

The eyes of the Tahitians grew dull, they ceased to chant their native *meles*, they watched the sharks.

"Fo' shark, Aboti," said Tarua, the quartermaster, to Abbott, the mate. 'One fo' Tarua, one fo' Keilokoa, one fo' Aroki, one fo' Kawana. No mo' time I think we see Papeete. This time I think we finish up."

Abbott, knowing their natures, tried to bolster them, but from then on their hope faded, they bade farewell to the thatched houses in the grove where the sunlight splashes through green fronds upon the tall stems of coco-palms and the level ground where the *fahines* wander with a *lei* of fragrant *awapuhi* about their necks that are molded like golden pillars, and the men stroll with a scarlet hibiscus bloom tucked behind the ear.

They resigned the plunge at dawn with the hearth smokes curling up against the blue and green of crags that seemed to be draped with velvet, topped by fireswept battlements where the mists glow sulfur and pink in the sunrise. They gave up the palm-torches flaring on the reef while godlike figures plunged spear and trident into the pools for squid. They relinquished the song and laughter, the love won or dreamed of, they lost their grip on life and, as their wills slackened, so their bodies weakened until, one by one, they died and, for lack of other burial, the sharks got them.

All this the albatross had seen as he glided on, with now and then a rare, querulous cry that held the very spirit of the sea and of its leagues upon leagues of loneliness.

The muscular body of Abbott had slowly shrunk from lack of nourishment, from the toll of sun and sea and wind. His skin was burned darker than that of the natives had been. His blond, long hair and unkempt beard were startling in their blond contrast, his steadfast eyes looked like insets of pale turquoise as he humored the rise of the boat to the sea, the slant of the wind in their sail. At night he watched the stars. When it was fine he napped while he held the oar, subconsciously answering to the pressure of the waves until at last he would head the little craft up into the wind, and, throwing out the sea-anchor that had served them through many a squall, sleep like a tired child.

There were deep sores in the palms of his hands, about his wrists and on his feet and ankles. He had for clothing only a pair of duck trousers and a singlet, sometimes a wetted bandanna bound about his head. His face was lined, but it showed resolution, the will to live.

The older man had a face deep-seamed with wrinkles framed in a tangle of white hair and whitish-yellow beard. His eyes glowed dark in cavernous sockets. They were red-rimmed, his face was crusted with crystals of salt. His bones showed through

Digitized by Google

his clothing and his long-fingered hands were like claws, working—working, twisting at a rope's-end, shredding it to oakum.

"Professor," said Abbott, hoarsely, "it's time for chow. You'd better try and eat. Don't want to git too low."

Henshaw, professor of several allied sciences, did not move. The mate, steering with one hand, divided on the middle thwart some dry scraps of bully-beef, some fragments of biscuit and poured into an empty bully-tin a little water, covering the bottom a scant half-dozen inches from the tepid liquid in a keg. The water drizzled slowly from the tap and Abbott tilted the keg—that lay lengthwise—with a motion of his foot.

Division made, he tapped cautiously and lightly with his knuckles on the staves, frowning a trifle at the hollow sound.

"How much?" croaked Henshaw. With his high-bridged nose and his hollow eyes his face looked hawk-like, almost the mummy of a hawk.

"I reckon there's about three gallons left. And there's another tin o' beef. Couple of biscuits. Pantry ain't empty yet."

"It might as well be."

"There'll be rain. We may get an albacore."

He glanced to where a line ran astern with a hook baited with a rag.

"The sharks took the last we hooked. They'll take the next. As for the rain——"

The professor's shrug was eloquent.

"You ain't giving up hope, are you? I've been worse off than this an' come through. We've got fair weather an' a good breeze. We're headin' right."

"Heading for a speck in the ocean. I've not given up hope. I want to reason with you."

"You chew on that grub first. Wash it down, professor. It don't do to git too low, if we've got to fast later."

Henshaw swallowed a few morsels, drank his share of the water. Abbott forced his ration down stolidly to the last crumb.

"What's on your mind, professor?" he said after he had carefully put aside the scraps that the other refused.

"This: We've got enough to keep one of us alive for, say a week. A week. Seven days of chance. Divide it and you halve the chance. Once we have used up the last of our fuel we'll fail rapidly. I am an old man, my body calls for less nourishment than yours. We are about equal now. But we've neither of us got any reserves. We'll sputter out like a lamp when the oil has gone.

"You talk of hope. An abstract thing. Our chance to be picked up—a slender one in these seas—or to make a landfall, is to be measured by time. By numbers. Seven days as against three and a half. Or eight against four. Four days from now both of us will be dead or eight days from now one of us may be alive."

"I don't git you." Abbott looked at Henshaw narrowly.

"I am perfectly sane. Let us sum up our rights to live. You have greater muscular force than I, you might kill me for your better chance. I am not afraid of that. I might kill you. I have the means. I have no intent to commit murder. It is a matter of ethics."

He hitched himself up against the supporting thwart and, as the mate continued to survey him silently and curiously, produced, with an effort, an automatic pistol from inside his stained shirt.

"I picked this up as I left my cabin. A bullet from it would be merciful, as against a lingering death.

"I am an old man, but a useful one. On the island to which we were voyaging I have formerly discovered uranium. I shall try to be brief and not technical. The island is not specifically volcanic. It is metalliferous, which volcanic rocks seldom are. It has been upthrust from the sea by a submarine convulsion. Uranium means radium, helium gas. The mineral and the gas are of enormous value. You must know that. I do not mean now their monetary worth. The boon of radium to humanity has been proven, but it is still in an experimental stage. And its quantity is limited. Not long ago America subscribed a large amount to give a small portion of radium to its discoverer that she might go on with her tests and combat disease. Helium gas may solve the conquest of the air."

The mate looked involuntarlly at the albatross, returned his gaze to Henshaw and nodded.

"I know enough about 'em to appreciate that," he said. "Go on."

"Definite discovery and announcement would mean much to the world. The loss of

Digitized by Google

the schooner is not paramount so far as my personal safety is concerned. If I do not return within four months from the day we left Papeete a relief expedition will come after me. I arranged for that, leaving the position of the island with the captain with whom I made the arrangement and placing sufficient money in the bank against such necessity. But I have said nothing, for many reasons, concerning the uranium.

"If either of us reaches the island there will be no trouble as to subsistence. There is ample water. There are fish and fruit. No inhabitants, no noxious reptiles, few insects, slight chance of sickness."

His voice began to fail him.

"Better take a swallow of water," suggested Abbott. Henshaw shook his head, clearing his throat.

"You are a young man. Unmarried, I believe, but in the course of ordinary events you will marry. You will have children. That is your right; to live, to love, to procreate. If you reach the island you would not be able to detect the uranium. If you even attempted to there would be grave danger connected with the endeavor. The uranium belongs to Science, to be dispensed for the benefit of the whole human race. It is an asset of the world at large. With my death, the world is deprived of it. But I am willing to set aside my special knowledge, to consider us merely as two men with equal rights to live."

"I don't just see," said Abbott slowly as Henshaw appeared to be waiting for him to say something, "what you're drivin' at."

"This. We two are out of the world, shut off from all conventions, our fates in our own hands. Man to man, under primitive circumstances, we naturally revert to a primitive solution of our immediate problem. That is not necessarily the survival of the fitter, for it is agreed that one is as fit as the other. The problem is merely the survival of one rather than the death of two."

"We ain't at the end of our grub. Time to talk then, seems to me. You suggestin' one of us kills the other?"

"Exactly. With this gun. It is my gun and no doubt I could kill you with it before you could wrest it from me. But I desire to be absolutely fair—to make you a fair offer. In circumstances like these men have killed each other and have subsisted on each other's flesh. The desire for life, either for the indulgence in primitive emotions or the exercise of intellectual faculties, is supreme. The time to talk is now. We are growing weaker, body and mind, day by day, hour by hour. Soon it will be minute by minute. Neither of us may survive in any event.

"My plan does not call for self-sacrifice. I will take this ring from my finger and place it in the palm of one hand while I keep my hands behind my back. I will extend my hands and you will make your choice. If you choose the hand with the ring I shall hand you the revolver. You understand——"

ABBOTT comprehended but he found it difficult to realize that this understanding was not conceived in delirium. Henshaw seemed sane yet he could not be so. To the mate no other solution of the situation would ever have occurred than to go on sharing until the last of the food was gone. The professor was in earnest. He had the pistol. Even if he could not kill Abbott with it before the mate took it away from him, he would be apt to wound him badly. And he proposed to give up this weapon or to retain it for a purpose at once so deadly and cold-blooded that Abbott was hard put to it to consider it seriously.

Sane or not, there was no doubt that Henshaw was in earnest. His burning eyes compelled acknowledgment of that. And he had the pistol. The production of the gun affected Abbott much as would the appearance of a joker, unsuspected of being in the deck, suddenly injected into what was supposedly a friendly game and dominating a stake of life and death. The mate was of phlegmatic type. He could urge his body to spurts of dynamic energy when occasion called but his mind worked slowly.

"I'd call that murder," he said finally.

"Murder is a term coined by communities. There are just the two of us."

"You've made up your mind we won't make your island inside of three days—make it four—or be picked up—or git some rain, maybe some fish?"

"The probabilities are entirely against it. With our strength failing we cannot count on probabilities."

"I'm willin' to take a chance on God."

"What kind of a god? There is no god that takes a personal interest in you or me.

Digitized by Google

There may be a Power. An Initial Force. Or, if there be a god, it is one who made the world as one may make a machine. So long as He is interested in it, so long as the machine runs smoothly, He is satisfied. Does He care for the atoms of dust on the flywheel? No more than a man who shapes a blade cares for the sparks that fly from the grindstone. God will not change the natural reactions of His contrivance to save you and me, Abbott. Did He save the rest? What of the thousands who have called on Him and perished? Allow that He has created conditions—we must abide by them. You talk of rain. A dozen times rain has fallen, spouting down in plain sight of us, yet never reaching us, gone before we could come near it. A personal god. Bah!"

"I believe in one," replied Abbott. "I'm twenty-nine. I've been at sea fourteen years steady. I've seen too many things not to be sure there's a Plan. An' some one back of it. I ain't religious. I don't go to any church. But I've seen a ship brought to here an' there, I've helped to mark her course an' place on the chart by the sun an' the stars in their courses. If things was all chance, all a mix-up, they wouldn't all run like a great, wonderful clock. There's other things, Mr. Henshaw, hard for me to put in words, but I'm sure there's a God an' I'm willin' to put it up to Him. I know it."

Henshaw cackled.

"Why should He put himself out for you and let the rest go?"

"I reckon that's a matter of faith. I can't argue it with you. Seems to me if you believe a thing hard enough you might set up some sort of vibrations that 'ud produce cohesion, bring about a manifestation of power."

"What is this, Abbott? Some new sort of belief?"

"It's stuff I've thought out for myself nights on watch, thinking about radio an' broadcastin'.

"Bah! Faith is purely abstract. Things to be proven must be exact. Get down to brass tacks, Abbott."

The mate saw that Henshaw was getting irritated. That new factor of a gun must be figured from now on. He had spoken as he felt, hoping at the same time, not so much to argue with Henshaw, as to divert him.

"This island of yours, sir," he said. "You say it's got two peaks between four an' five thousand feet high?"

"Two peaks. Not craters. Solid masses. One four thousand eight hundred and sixty, the other two hundred and ninety feet less, by calculations formed by observations on boiling points. It looks like a molar tooth at a distance—not much larger—when you first sight it. Why?"

"You could sight it a good way off. Now look here, Mr. Henshaw, that island of yours is the nearest land to us right now."

"How do you know? We may have passed it already. In the night."

"That ain't likely. Ever since the storm we ran into, third day after we left the schooner, the weather's been clear. It 'ud be pretty hard for us to move fast enough between sunset an' sunrise for us to sail into sight of the island an' out of it. Could be done, of course. I've got balled up a bit on my dead reckonin' since that storm, I'll admit. I've got a good idea of apparent altitudes of stars for this time of year an' I can make a good eye-guess at angles. That don't help us any with longitude, but I don't believe we've overshot the mark, we're headin' right an' more 'n that, we've been in a current that's settin' us down that way for the last twenty-four hours.

"It's a cross current. We're too far south for the cross currents between the north an' south equatorials. No doubt of that. Pretty safe to say we're over the Duprez Level, even bottom at fourteen hundred fathom. No big depressions, no high peaks, 'cordin' to all soundin's.

"No bunch of shallow reefs, no big group of atolls fillin' up on the flood an' spillin sixty ways at once on the ebb. This is an independent current trailing nor' west an' sou' east, a stray, an' it's bound to take us somewhere. There's a reason for it an' I figure that reason is a mountain lifting up from the bottom all by itself with its top makin' an island—your island. We'll find the current curlin' round it. It's a good theory. We may sight the peaks within twenty-four hours with this fair wind an' weather. Or it might take several days. I don't claim to be able to say where we are."

"How could you? In that storm, according to your own observations, we ran into the outer ring of a typhoon and after three days of not knowing where we were

Digitized by Google

heading, of heading in a dozen directions every hour, three days and nights when we didn't see either stars or sun, we were flung out at a tangent. Your theory about the island may be correct. It has nothing to do with my point, that one man in this case has a better chance than two. I've thought this all out, Abbott, carefully."

"Given plenty of time to it, sir?"

"Three days. Ever since we opened the next to the last can of beef."

"Ah! Then give me twenty-four hours to think it over."

Abbott caught an involuntary gleam of approval in the professor's eyes. He was quite sure now that Henshaw was suffering from a touch of sun, like Evans. Only what had turned the Welshman into a raving maniac had—so far—only affected the scientist comparatively. What continued exposure might bring about was conjectural; at present the professor was keen enough to see the logic in the mate's demand. His phase of sun-sickness emphasized a desire for scrupulous fairness.

Henshaw glanced at the boat's rib nearest to him. It threw only a scant line of shadow on its stern side. There was no watch in the boat, no compass, no chronometer. There had been no time for outfitting at the last moment when the schooner had been shattered under the stroke of a surmounting wave as she staggered on, water-logged and rudderless. To read the time they watched the shadows. Abbott rationed the one meal every day when he judged them shortest.

"Tomorrow," agreed Henshaw. "At this time. After we've opened the last can of beef."

Abbott fancied that the professor held an idea that the opening of the last bully-tin might influence his decision. But he seemed to settle down more quietly, and Abbott, with nothing else to do, considered the proposition. Whether by suggestion or otherwise, he did not feel so well within the last half hour. There were cramps in his stomach and he had a dull headache that made thinking an effort. Occasionally his thoughts broke all connection so that he could not remember the point he was making and groped for it a little wildly until suddenly it would come back to him. His sores burned, his skin seemed on fire. His stomach trouble he laid to the water. It was getting stale. The beef was none too good. Any remnants that he tried to reserve from the noon ration to appease his gnawing hunger later on quickly blackened and spoiled. The biscuits were squirming copra bugs, the only things that seemed to keep lively in the heat; excepting the sharks and the fish in the sea, and the albatross that kept its position above the boat as fixed as if it had been a kite attached by a string.

Abbott had few of a sailor's superstitions, or thought he had. Now every ancient yarn about the ill-luck of an albatross recurred to him. They were reincarnations of damned sailors, working out their release by following living mariners until one of them, evil-hearted as they had been, died in the sea. They were the ghosts of the drowned trying to find where their bones lay in the ooze. They were—

He soaked the faded cloth and tied it about his head where the sutures were opening with the heat.

At first Henshaw's proposition seemed monstrous. Then, little by little, it began to appear less terrible. Abbott knew something of the toll of the open sea. In his fourteen years he had seen boats and canoes overhauled, with blackened corpses aboard, and he knew how many, many more had perished utterly. There was not an island in the South Pacific without its tales of lost tribesmen. Their own hopes were infinitesimal when they were reduced to a stern array of chances. Save that he pinned his faith on his God. He knew there was one. He could summon no arguments to prove it, his faith was almost something subconscious, something that, slowly accumulating, had become a part of him.

There was a God.

The professor was old, and he was young. He weighed that argument. He had no ties, there was no woman waiting for him, no one dependent upon him. Henshaw's discovery meant banishment of suffering, conquest of disease, progress of science. A thought—it seemed like an inner voice—began to propound the inexorable fact that Henshaw's chance of life was worth far more than his. If it lay between his life and that of some woman or child Abbott knew that he would have made the supreme sacrifice willingly. Here was not the life of one but of a multitude.

He reviewed all he had heard and read

Digitized by Google

about the curative virtues of radium. It cured cancer. It——

THE heat was terrific. The rays of the sun seemed to strike through the skin and clothes and sear the surface of a myriad nerves. His brain was simmering inside his skull. Henshaw was right. Exposure and exhaustion had brought him to the point where he could no longer resist.

But there was food. It was not right to give up while there was food. When it was gone—Henshaw was right again—then it would be too late for either of them. Unless——

He roused himself and his sun-scorched eyes roved the southern horizon. There was no sign of land or sail. Nor on the northern arc. Only the albatross and the four sharks, the blue sky and the rolling sea. The bows of the boat lifted and dropped with a splash as it lunged ahead. Then came the tap-tap of the waves, rapping at the hull, like hammers on a floating coffin.

Thirst possessed him with a frenzy of longing. Visions formed—visions and sounds. Running water, streaming from a tap in a tiled bathroom. Masses of water hurtling over Yosemite Cliffs, green trees waving in the foreground. Running streams. A still, cool pool, rock-bound and a leaping trout. He could see the flash of the fish. Phantasmagoria. Scraps of memory.

Something hot ran down his bristly chin into his lower beard. He had bitten through his cracked lips. There was water in the keg. It was going bad. Once started toward corruption it would not last long. Drink it now. *Now!*

There came a tremendous tug at his oar. It was nearly snatched from his hand and, automatically, his muscles coordinated and he gripped it with both hands, snatching it from the maw of the shark that had made a rush for it, exasperated perhaps by too long a wait, or thinking to overturn the boat. The blade came away, splintered by the rows of teeth, and he lunged at the sea brute as it sheered off.

He still had strength. Things seemed to clear, and he saw Henshaw lying awkwardly couched between the thwarts with his cavernous eyes fixed on him, watchfully. They seemed to glitter strangely. Henshaw had the gun. What if his madness should culminate?

Abbott reached for another oar and set it in place.

"Shark," he said. "Fooled him."

Henshaw nodded and half-closed his eyes. But there was a gleam between the lids. If he should sleep?

Abbott resolved to get the gun and throw it into the sea.

Relief came to him at the determination. Henshaw reclined with his hand inside his grimy shirt, doubtless upon the butt of the automatic. Every now and then he opened his eyes to a quick, alert stare. He was like a cat that affects to doze outside a mouse-hole, with sentinel senses alert, an alarum set by the earnest purpose of his will.

The afternoon wore on. The sun slowly rolled to the west. Vapors gathered, filmy things that took on gorgeous hues, changing shape and color, flaming and fading till, as the rim of the sun dropped behind the lift of a wave and vanished, the sky changed like a painted drop when an electrician switches off. In an instant the stars were out, a glittering host, as if a giant handful of gold grains had been flung into the heavens and were sifting down, catching the light of the retreating sun. An hour more and the moon sailed up in the east, like a disk of pearl-shell, slightly mottled, throwing a track across the sea, turning the dark waves to silver-gilt.

The albatross was lost to sight. But its plaintive cry sounded, more like a ghost's wail than ever in the void. The dorsals of the sharks trailed fire. The boat crushed out radiance from the sea. Abbott's steering-oar churned liquid fire.

Henshaw's eyes were wide open. They caught the moonshine and held it. Abbott felt sleep like the pressure of deep water. He had had but little lately.

The breeze held, but it was fainter. It seemed as if the rising moon was dissolving it. It was still steady, but now and then the lugsail shook and filled again with a flap as it lost impulse in a valley. The mate felt too inert to rig the sea-anchor. He decided to lash the oar then remembered the sharks. There were other oars. A shark could not upset the boat. But they were growing bolder. Still——

He decided to risk it. A little sleep and then he would be refreshed. Henshaw would drop off, and he could get the gun. He secured the oar to the gunwale slot and

Digitized by Google

settled down with his back in the stern. The last thing he saw was the gaze of Henshaw, unwinking, luminous, and his seamed face with the white hair and beard like frosted silver. It was cooler.

ABBOTT came out of a nightmare where a great multitude of people, women and children in the foreground, men behind, gazed on him with accusing eyes while, like a universal sigh, the words sounded, "you might have saved us."

The stars were dimmed to needle points that barely pierced through a filmy haze. The wind had died utterly, and the boat was rolling in an oily swell, the sail folded about the mast. The steering-oar was gone. A shark might have got it or it might have worked loose. The moon was low in the west, viciously red. The smell of dawn was in the air, but it lacked freshness. The boat sagged wearily, pointing aimlessly. They were out of the current, without means of progress. Abbott knew his reserves would not stand up against any stretch of rowing.

As for Henshaw— The gun! Abbott raised himself cautiously, his hands gripping the gunwales. The professor shifted, lifted his head. He was wide awake. An old man, needing little sleep, guarding the gun. He was clever enough to have forestalled that idea of Abbott's.

The moon sank into a belt of dense vapor, sliding down without a halo. The east grayed, glowed, a copper sun crept up reluctantly, turned to brass, mounting a sky that turned a grayish blue, almost opaque, looking like a great glazed bowl above them.

With a cry like a lost soul the albatross glided on. The sharks—there were six of them now! Two more had come mysteriously up out of the sea, as buzzards gather in the air. Their fins sliced through the greasy heave of the sea. The water no longer hissed, no longer crested. It resembled molten metal with strange gleams of copper and brass, leaden in the shallow vales. The heat was like that of a steam-room. Their lungs labored.

Henshaw spoke first, with great effort, his voice seeming a long way off.

"Where's your wind and current?" he asked. "Why prolong it, Abbott?"

His eyes seemed mocking as he started to draw off his ring.

"No," said the mate doggedly. "No." The syllable was a harsh guttural. It seemed to tear his throat. "Not yet."

The haze wore off a little. The sun seemed to burn it off. The rim of the ocean became sharper—and more desolate. The boat rocked like a cradle. Once it tilted. A shark had left post and was nuzzling at it. Then another. They all closed in, occasionally lolling on their sides, showing the dirty gray of their bellies. The blunt tapering snouts, the striped backs, were always close to the surface. The albatross was lower and its head swayed oftener from side to side with greedy eyes peering down at the two exhausted men.

Food was a loathing. But their mouths seemed filled with hardening glue in which their tongues swelled. The tip of Henshaw's tongue showed between his swollen, blistered, shapeless lips.

The shadow of the mast and sail, varying with the roll of the boat, steadily shortened. Slowly the shadows of the thwarts retreated. The umbra of the boat's ribs narrowed—narrowed.

"Now," croaked Henshaw.

Abbott moved stiffly. His eyes were fixed, the lids tight upon them. He reached for the last bully-tin, scattering the hard fragments of the professor's ration of yesterday. The beef would not last long after they had opened it.

There was a key attached to the square tin and he attached it to the little tongue of metal and started to peel off the top, the can hot and heavy in his hands. The metal strip showed dark blue as it rolled toward the opening point. Suddenly it parted. There was a hissing whiff of escaping gas, a putrid odor that sickened him. The contents were a loathsome, poisonous mass.

Abbott hurled it overboard. A shark turned lazily, opened its great maw, closed it about the tin and sank slowly down with its prize.

"Rotten!" he said.

"Ah!"

He took one of the biscuits and broke it, tapping out the crawling things on the thwart. Then he turned the tap of the keg above the water tin. The water came out murky and foul—not merely stale. It was undrinkable.

Abbott dropped it and stared ahead

Digitized by Google

dully, past the professor. Henshaw fumbled in his bosom.

"It's the end," he muttered almost inarticulately. "For both."

As Abbott suddenly scrambled to his feet, Henshaw dragged out the automatic, but it caught in a fold of his shirt and he tugged at it. But the mate sat down again, heavily, shaking his head. Henshaw freed the gun and laid it down beside him. He took off his ring. His idea still obsessed him.

"The one who wins," he gasped. "Shoots. Then—there are more bullets."

The mate nodded apathetically. The professor put his hands behind him then extended them. Abbott tapped Henshaw's right fist. For a second Henshaw looked at him with his face the color of wax, his jaw sagging. Slowly he upturned his fist and opened the fingers. The ring lay in his palm. Abbott reached forward and took the gun. It lay in his hands like a venomous thing, inert, but deadly. He gazed about the rim of the sea with desperate eyes. Then he tossed the gun overboard. A shark came with a rush.

Henshaw half rose on his thwart.

"You fool—you fool!" he screeched. "Now we must——"

Henshaw was up again, balancing himself with wide-spread legs to the pitch of the boat, his gaze alight, his arm outstretched, his hand pointing beyond the mast, beyond the bows.

"I thought I saw something," he cried, his lips cracking and bleeding with the effort of his jaws. "Look!"

Like a blue stain, indigo on cobalt, faint on the rim of the sea it showed, like a molar tooth, two pronged peaks projecting from a base.

"We've all day to make it. We'll row. No, there's wind to come."

His sailor's eyes saw the forming cumulus of clouds, ghostly but shaping slowly. The professor clung to the mast, lifting himself, shading his sight with a trembling hand, clutching the spar with the other.

"Thank God!" he muttered. "Thank God!"

The color of the sea changed. Already the wind was stirring it, coming toward them. The albatross mewed and wheeled, spiraling up. The sharks had gone, following the two who had achieved tin and gun.

"I told you there was a God," said Abbott, coming forward to the sail.

The professor did not answer. His eyes were straining toward the island.

THE WORLD'S LARGEST CAVE

by **Earl H. Emmons**

WHERE is it? Unless you live along the Missouri River Valley, you probably do not know, because the cave never has been extensively advertised.

It is Wind Cave, near Hot Springs, in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Only a comparatively small portion of the cave has been explored, but this exploration comprises well over a hundred miles of underground passages. Along this route are more than three thousand rooms, the entire interior of the cave being coated with beautiful crystals in many formations, while strong currents of air blow through at all times.

Here also may be found the world's largest natural underground cavern. It is known as the Fair Grounds and is several acres in extent.

The cave was discovered in 1881 by a hunter who paused a moment directly over one of the outlets of the cavern. The gentleman relates that he stepped over a small hole in the ground and immediately a blast of warm air shot up his pants legs, continued up his back, out of his collar and knocked his hat off, which made him lose interest in his hunting-trip with a great deal of suddenness. When he finally stopped running and recovered his breath he told his experience and led a party back to the spot.

The cave is a Government institution and open to tourists throughout the year.

Digitized by Google

BY IMPERIAL POST

by George E Holt

Author of "For His Family Honor," "The Right Hand of Sidi Dowhdi," etc.

IF EACH eighth of an inch difference in margin between the rim of a postage stamp and the edge of the envelope, either latitudinally or longitudinally, be of significance, with an area of some thirty square inches to be utilized for position, and if, in addition to this, several stamps, of various values and colors be available, to be affixed not only with respect to margins, but endwise, askew, or upside-down, there may be made an astonishing number of combinations—a number quite sufficient, if each arrangement stand for a certain phrase, for highly reprehensible correspondence to be carried on with a generous vocabulary.

The number of combinations possible with these factors was shown in two little books, constituting the entire edition, which were for the purely personal and extremely private use of one Wilhelm Breitfeldt, a fat merchant of Dar-el-Baida, and Hadj Thami Slawi, a Moor, and therefore a Mohammedan, whose chief business seemed to be continually to travel about from one tribe to another in northern Morocco, for the purpose of making inquiries concerning the condition of the crops. His peregrinations tended to repeat their orbits, which included stoppings at Tangier, Tetuan, Melilla and Fez, and other places where there were branches of the German postoffice service, and at these places it was most unusual for Hadj Thami not to receive at least one letter, and to send at least one, upon which the stamps, to a careful observer, might have seemed carelessly placed.

Now, this was before the war, when Morocco was still the intriguing ground of half the nations of Europe, and when the French held the upper hand in the north and the Germans in the south. The result of this situation was that while France exerted itself to create dissatisfaction against the Germans in Sus, the Germans plotted eternally against France in the north, and promised all sorts of impossible things in the name of the German Kaiser, who was to become the father and protector of Islam the world over. Wherefore the Moors were pretty evenly divided between those who pretended to believe in French pretentions because of fear of the Germans, and those who inclined their ears courteously to German lies and boasting because of fear of the French. And, of course, all over the country there were innumerable big and little people like Wilhelm Breitfeldt and Hadj Thami Slawi, who were doing similar things in different ways. It was indeed an unimportant tribe or village which did not have in it spies of both French and German allegiance to muddy the waters of truth.

Wilhelm Breitfeldt and Hadj Thami made a good team. The former, fat, red-faced and slow of thought and speech, puttered interminably over his shopful of German farm implements at Dar-el-Baida, smoked

"By Imperial Post," copyright, 1922, by George E. Holt.

Digitized by Google

his big pipe with the German Consul, drank beer in the latter's garden, and made friends of all the foreign children in town, except the French, of course, as all Germans do. And he wrote letters, many letters, concerning farm implements, and grains and crops and seasons and German methods of cultivation, irrigation, harvesting, and sale. Some of these letters were addressed to Hadj Thami, who spoke to the north country at large concerning the pigs of Germans and their agricultural methods, and to an occasional *kaid* or chief in a less public manner, but also concerning the Germans and their methods.

Thus had matters progressed for many months in a manner most satisfactory to those concerned; namely, Wilhelm Breitfeldt, who received some praise and much money from a certain mercantile firm in Berlin; Hadj Thami, who received more praise and less money from Wilhelm Breitfeldt; various north-country petty chiefs who received no praise, but some money from Hadj Thami, and who therefore industriously raised up trouble for the French until the French should pay them more money than Hadj Thami.

At the time with which this particular incident deals, both Wilhelm Breitfeldt and his Mohammedan representative were in an extremely felicitous mood, for there were big events in the making. Through a queer trick of Allah, Hadj Thami had found a most powerful northern *kaid* to be "in the market," purchasable for a surprizingly reasonable amount. The reason for this does not concern us; it involved a French-Algerian and a wife of the *kaid*. But the result was that the powerful one was ready to throw his strength in favor of Berlin—for a consideration; and despite the fact that he was drawing a handsome pension from the French for good behavior.

This news Hadj Thami had hurriedly confirmed and communicated to Wilhelm Breitfeldt by means of an inverted pink five-centimo German stamp placed three quarters of an inch from the left hand margin of a sea-green envelope. Wilhelm Breitfeldt forwarded the news to a Berlin address in the form of a wireless message—*via* the French station—relating to the prompt shipment of five disk-harrows, and was informed, in a marvellously short time that five disk-harrows had been shipped to his address as per his instructions. By which he knew that the purchase of one fat and dusky north-country *kaid* for five thousand Spanish dollars had been approved and that the money would reach him in due course of business.

Wherefore he was much pleased. Not only because the affair would mean more praise and more money to him, but because he was patriotic with that German patriotism like which there is nothing else on earth, or in heaven above, nor in hell below, and this same *kaid* could give France and her mimic Sultan more trouble than all other northern *kaids* put together. And so Wilhelm Breitfeldt prepared with care a letter of instruction to Thami Slawi, who was sticking close to the rebellious *kaid* so that he should not change his mind again. Neither Wilhelm Breitfeldt nor Hadj Thami nor the *kaid* himself guessed even faintly the importance of the matter; but in one little corner of the Berlin Foreign Office there was a riffle of excitement—because there it was known that the war was but a little way off—the mere matter of an Archduke's journey to Sarajevo, and some other simple preliminaries—and the defection of this important northern *kaid might* throw all Morocco into the war on the side of Germany.

Therefore it was a matter of some importance, although this was concealed from Herr Breitfeldt as he carefully stuck a pink five-centimo stamp in a certain position on a sea-green envelope addressed to Hadj Thami, who was then painting delightful pictures of profit and revenge to an angry northern *kaid*.

"It iss to der mittle ofer too far," grumbled Herr Breitfeldt, viewing the result of his labors. "Der stampf id shouldt neffer be so much oud of blace dat id loogs gonspiguous. But *I* neffer t'ought ve shouldt needt to sendt *such* a message. I t'ought dat Kaid Bus'lham vas body undt soul mit der *verdammt* French. Budt idt vill do."

THE God of Islam has always shown a tender regard for the French—a most marvellous regard, considering the things which France has done to Islam. And so it was that Allah at this moment saw fit to interfere again on their behalf. The volume of mail at the Dar-el-Baida office of the German postal system in Morocco had grown, with some very good reasons, to a size which had

Digitized by Google

demanded of Teutonic efficiency the installation of a mechanical stamp-canceller, replacing the old rubber hand canceller. The advantage of the old implement was that the clerk making the cancellation could strike a stamp no matter what its position upon the envelope; the disadvantage of the recently installed machine was that unless the stamp were in the upper right hand corner of the envelope, it would not cancel it, and the letter had to be taken out of the machine and the stamp marked by hand.

Now, Herr Breitfeldt was aware neither of the installation of this machine nor of the fact that his correspondence had become a source of intense annoyance to the pimply-faced, low-browed German youth who operated the cancellation machine.

"Fat pig of a merchant!" thus he spoke of the estimable Herr Breitfeldt. "Does he think that the postoffice is operated for his mail only? Now I must use the machine for all letters save his, and his I must fish out from between the wheels, at risk of my fingers, and cancel in the old manner."

He fished from the machine the sea-green envelope and gazed angrily upon it.

"Another! With the *verdammt* stamp in the *verdammt* middle of the *verdammt* envelope. *Donner und blitzen*—is it a joke he plays on me? Or does he not want his stamp marked up by the machine! But he shall have it so, none the less. I will show the——"

It was a long German word, lasting almost as long as it took for the pimply youth to peel the stamp from the envelope, dab it with glue from a handy pot, and stick it smearily in the upper right hand corner of the envelope.

"There! Pig!" he observed, as the wheels of the machine bit the letter and the tape carried it through. "For once you go as you should go."

And even as the letter passed between the wheels of the machine, so the plot of Herr Breitfeldt and Hadj Thami passed harmlessly through the wheels of events For, following the instructions conveyed by a pink five-centimo stamp in the extreme upper right hand corner of a sea-green envelope, Hadj Thami spoke words of scorn to a rebellious and powerful north-country *shiekh*, consigning him and his allegiance to the dogs, or to the French, and thereby causing that same power to become as a raving devil against the Kaiser and all his works.

The pimply boy was killed very shortly thereafter in a trench on the Marne; Herr Breitfeldt lived long enough to give an order which resulted in Hadj Thami drinking a cup of arsenicated tea and passing abruptly to the smiles of the Prophet. But one day he too died suddenly before a rough stone wall on the outskirts of Dar-el-Baida, with several bullet holes in his shirt.

Digitized by Google

OVER THE RIM OF THE RIDGE

A Four-Part Story
Part Two

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Pay Gravel," "War Wampum," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

IN THE Territory of Nevada in 1861 sympathy with the North or South was not so grave a dispute as the side a man took in the Ophir or Moscow silver-mine ledge.

At Roney's Place in Placerville, California, a gambler—Washoe by name—awaited the coach bound to Nevada. Recognizing two acquaintances at the bar, "Sorry" Kane and "Feeble" Thomas, he ordered the bartender to serve them drinks.

Bill Mayfield, notorious bully and bad-man, knocked into Thomas, causing him to drop several specimens of rich silver ore, and so it became common knowledge that Feeble had made a strike.

The arrival of the coach prevented further developments. One of the passengers was a girl.

Washoe and Mayfield both boarded the coach; and that same night, when all the passengers were eating at a wayside house, the girl—Matilda Jaimson—confided in Washoe. She was traveling alone, she explained, because her father, rather than pay toll, had taken his wagon around all the rivers. She intended to wait for him in Carson City.

Later in a dispute with Mayfield she forced the bully to back down.

But Washoe was worried about the girl and inducing her to stop over at Genoa drove her from there to Carson City in a light wagon. As the girl's father had not yet arrived, Washoe left her in charge of Miss Clapp at Sierra Seminary and hastened to the St. Nicholas bar.

The town was all agog with news of the rich ore found by Kane and Thomas. "Kell" Hawkins, a crooked gambler, spoke slightingly of the girl. Washoe threatened the gambler, and to even the score Hawkins and two of his pals tried to swindle Washoe. Washoe used his gun, and the three gamblers departed for Virginia City vowing to get even.

Kane and Thomas, appealed to Washoe for help; and he, promising to share with the crowd any secrets they might reveal, managed to get them to his room. When Washoe told them of the threats of the disgruntled gamblers, they offered to take him to their hiding-place provided they could get safely away from Carson City.

This they succeeded in doing. The two old miners led Washoe to a tunnel in a hillock, which they had comfortably fitted up. And now Kane and Thomas revealed the fact that a man named Jaimson had paid them the silver ore for mailing a letter for him. This letter, they said, was addressed to his daughter, telling her not to come until she heard from him.

The two old-timers also told Washoe of their search for an ancient city where gold could be had for the taking. They offered to take Washoe in as a partner. He was anxious to get to Virginia City despite the fact that he knew his enemies would be waiting in ambush for him.

And so he waited for night and the darkness.

CHAPTER IV

PLANTER CASHES HIS CHIPS

UNDER the starlight Washoe walked the two miles to Gold Hill. The town appeared to be deserted, and after carefully reconnoitering the Virginia House bar through the windows and finding it empty except for a few grizzled miners at a table in the corner the young man ventured in and called for cigars and a beer. The lonely bartender eyed him in surprize and softly informed him:

"Heard you'd gone over the ridge. Usually glad to see you, but I ain't now. Take your beer into the boss' room and draw the curtain. You can get out by the side

"Over the Rim of the Ridge," copyright, 1922, by Hugh Pendexter.

Digitized by Google

door without being seen if any one comes in you don't want to see."

"Thanks. Place looked so empty I thought I'd risk it."

He took the beer into the small room serving as the proprietor's private office, and the bartender lingered to explain how there had been a general exodus to Virginia City because of the noon arrival at that town of "Gentle George." This was a widely known character, who had been living for the last three or four years in Salt Lake City. That his nickname was a bit of camp irony could be attested to by the notches on his guns and by the general fear in which he was held.

The impelling influence of the California vigilance committee had prompted his first visit to the Carson Valley. Before going on to Salt Lake he proved his deadliness so thoroughly that now, when it was known he was back, a town had emptied itself to witness further bloody activities. For there were few who did not believe a definite errand had called him back to the territory.

He differed quite a bit from the Bill Mayfield and the Hawkins brand of human misfits. Unlike Hawkins he cared nothing for gambling. Unlike Mayfield he was abstemious in his habits, and, consequently, was always on his guard. He possessed something of an education and prided himself on his careful speech. He was particular as to personal appearance, revealing a strong streak of vanity. Mayfield was a ferocious beast, Hawkins was a venomous snake, and Gentle George was the devil.

Washoe spoke the thought that was common to the valley when he mused—

"Wonder what brings him back here?"

The bartender glanced over the room to make sure the miners were occupied with their drinks and cards and darted a look at the windows and doors to discover a possible spy. Then, stepping inside the curtain and watching the barroom through a narrow aperture, he whispered:

"You're all white, Mister Washoe. I'd hate to see you rubbed out."

"So would I. What's on your mind, Jimmy?"

But the bartender was not to be hurried into any direct statements. In his roundabout way he continued:

"When the Virginia operator flashed word down here that George had just come in on the Salt Lake coach every one starts guessing as to who he's after. There don't seem to be any doubt but what it's a killing job. George don't do any prospecting and he don't care for games. But he likes the best of clothes and a slick "stove-pipe." What keeps him going, I ask you?"

He paused and darted another frightened glance through the curtains, then leaned over Washoe's shoulder and hoarsely whispered:

"*Winding up folks that some one wants to git rid of*— Am I right, or wrong?"

"Sounds sensible, Jimmy," murmured Washoe. "He never holds any one up for anything; and he must get money from some source. The few times he's come back here he stayed just long enough to kill some one."

"Some one's been paying him money in Utah for something, and he'd never come back here just for the fun of riding on a coach," muttered the bartender.

"But what has his coming to do with me being rubbed out?" demanded Washoe.

"Some say he's staked by a ring of Frisco speculators, who sometimes want to git hold of a new mine. You look over George's killings and you'll find more'n one where the men rubbed out had made a big strike. Then a Frisco lawyer stepped in with a piece of paper, said to have been made out by the dead man and giving the mine to a Frisco man. Then everything is settled up 'cording to law and the jack-pot's divided, and George comes out with a new 'stove-pipe' and a new notch on his gun."

"I trade feet. I own more worthless claims than any man on the lode. No one wants me rubbed out for any mining-interest. Your reasoning is twisted, Jimmy."

Jimmy licked his dry lips, took Washoe's empty glass and stepped into the bar and brought it back refilled and another for himself. Gulping down his beer hurriedly, he explained.

"I've said what some folks think. But there's other folks who say he's been hired to come on from Salt Lake and do a job for the gambling crowd at Virginia. It's being whispered that the Virginia card men would like to see a certain man rubbed out. That's why I was sorry to see you come in here. I'd hoped it was true, what was being told, that you'd gone over the ridge. George can jump back to Salt Lake after turning the trick and no one can't bother him there."

Digitized by Google

"Meaning Hawkins and his ring have hired George to do for me?"

The bartender nodded, then whispered:

"God help me! If a word of what I've said——"

"Stop your trembling," muttered Washoe. "George is a bad egg, but he's only human. A bullet can stop him even if fired by Sorry Kane or Feeble Thomas. If Hawkins' crowd brought George on they've worked fast. They've had time enough as I've been in hiding for a quite a few days. But what bothers me is their sending for George when it's generally believed I got scared and crossed over the ridge. No sense in hiring George to dog me to Frisco."

"If Hawkins wants to pay the price——"

"He's mad enough to pay a big price. Maybe you're right, Jimmy. Anyway, I'm glad I came in here and got your word. If ever you want a favor don't hunt around to find the right man. Come to me. I'll slide out this side door and sneak for Virginia."

"Washoe, don't go up there! Why make a fool play like that?"

"Got to, Jimmy. I own interests in quite a few rotten claims. Have to be on the spot to trade them off for worse claims. Either I'm going to keep on in business, or I'm going to be stopped."

With that Washoe readjusted his belt and slipped through the side door and made for the stage road, passing by the front of the hotel and for a moment or two presenting his profile to the light from the windows. He spun around and drew his hip-gun when a low voice called out—

"Hi! Washoe! Just a minute."

A man started toward him from the front door of the hotel. As he came on his hands went above his head, and he softly cautioned:

"John Blackburn. Don't get nervous."

Ashamed of his perturbation, Washoe restored his gun and greeted:

"Glad to see you, John. But I was thinking of Hawkins, Mayfield and George when you sang out."

"And you were walking where the light fell on your face. I've been waiting for you to come out of the bar. Saw you through the window when you went into the office. What the —— are you doing up here? Thought you was on t'other side of the mountains."

"On my way to Virginia."

"To get plugged full of lead."

"I hope not. Got to go anyway. Man never wins a race by running backwards!"

"Never did much running myself," grimly remarked Blackburn. "But you'll have to walk unless you take my horse. Everything on legs has been gobbled up to take the crowd up there. You're welcome to my nag. Leave it at the C Street stable where you keep your mare. Surprized to see you afoot."

Washoe explained about his mare going lame, also his subterfuge in booking a passage to Sacramento. Without giving the bartender's name he mentioned the theory held by some in the valley that George had been hired by the gambling ring. When he had finished Blackburn shook his head.

"They have Mayfield to use as a tool, and Bill is set on getting you. George has something important to attend to at Virginia, but I don't believe you're in it unless he's taking you on as a side issue since striking the town. You take my horse if you're bound to go. Well heeled, of course?"

"Loaded like an incoming freight wagon. I'll take the horse. It's mighty good of you, John. It's bound to put you out."

"I'll be along in a day or so. Good luck."

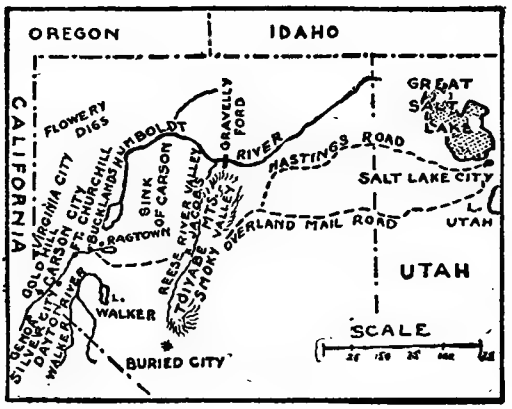
SECURING the horse, Washoe rode down the slope and through the Devil's Gate and soon was mounting the long slope to which clung Virginia City.

Virginia was passing from the fungus growth of a mining-camp to the stability of a town. Reminders of the haphazard camp-life were to be found in streets littered with old boots and hats, broken hardware and playing-cards. The place still afforded a rare stamping ground for desperadoes from the Mississippi States and California. Thug and cutthroat, gambler and professional killer, helped to make up the noxious growth that always has thrived for a little while during a certain period of building frontier centers. With freight rates at a tremendous figure costly bar equipment and wines were shipped in most lavishly. The barefooted man of today might be hailed as a new silver king on the morrow.

There were good women and there were foolish and unfortunate woman. There were good men who practised some of the vices of their fathers, and there were bad men who had inherited some of the virtues of their mothers. It was a hodge-podge of human emotions, a caldron of intense excitement and always boiling over. It was

Digitized by Google

the land of strangers, and human life was held cheaply unless homicide was coupled with assaults on property, when a community of interests was established and threats of reprisal were muttered. Every



shade of vice and degradation flourished in the hill city, and only business houses made a pretense of closing on the Sabbath. Extravagance and childish credulity went hand in hand.

At D Street Washoe dismounted and led his horse up the sharp ascent, one hand holding to the bridle, the other gripping a revolver. He advanced cautiously, and what had been the second-story window of a house became the first-story window after he gained the upper side. He tramped through the street refuse without being recognized, turned into C Street and, entering a large stable, led the horse to the rear of the structure, where a hostler was reading the *Enterprise* by the light of a lantern. After the first upward glance the hostler jumped to his feet, sent the horse into a stall with a slap on the flank, pulled Washoe out of the lantern light and lamented:

"Why did you come back, Washoe? Don't you know they're after you?"

"That's Blackburn's horse. Take good care of him. Blackburn will call for him. Ladyfoot went lame in Placerville. They're to send her over the ridge very soon— So they're after me? How did you know that?"

"Whole town knows it; that is, all the Saturday night crowd knows it. 'Frenchy,' Porter at the Magnolia, heard things. He told me. It's being whispered all over the place."

"Is Gentle George still here?"

"You bet he is! Crowds watching, but pretending to be looking t'other way when he looks around. He's a slick dresser. Some of the boys got up a pool as to who he'll kill first."

"Who's the favorite choice for victim?"

The hostler peered beyond the lantern toward the open door.

"I wouldn't take a chance in it, Washoe. If I won it would be like blood money. They're letting on it'll be you. Why'n —— couldn't you stayed away?"

"I'm going out the back door. Say nothing about my being here. Don't let sentiment interfere with taking your profits. But if you go in, get a combination and play me to take one or two with me."

With that he felt his way to the back door and slipped out into the night and, turning up his collar and slouching his hat over his eyes, made his way toward the International Hotel. It was at the International that Lemuel S. Bowers and his wife gave an entertainment to the town before starting on the European tour mischievously urged by Virginia miners. It had been a wild night, and Bowers had proven his boast that he had money "to throw to the birds" by drenching the whole community with a champagne. Before departing for the Old World he arranged for the erection of a mansion in Carson Valley which was guaranteed to cost nearly half a million dollars. Washoe smiled as he recalled the prodigal leave-taking and its many humorous phases. Then he grew sober as he remembered how carefree he had been that night with not a worthwhile enemy in the world. And now, so soon, he was stalking the hotel to escape a death-trap.

He entered the office and gazed about, but beheld only the usual groups of speculators, prospectors, merchants and hangers-on to the skirts of prosperity. There was no sign of Hawkins or any of his tribe. John Mackay, whom no prophecy as yet had picked out to be a bonanza prince, caught Washoe's eye and frowned and shook his head. But Washoe had gone too far to retreat, and with his under jaw thrust out to a fighting angle he sauntered to the bar-room and swiftly scanned the patrons. No enemies there, he decided, and walked carelessly toward the end of the bar. A bartender dropped and shattered a glass, then

Digitized by Google

sprang to wait on him. Several acquaintances in the crowd returned his nods and either retired from the room or to one side.

The bartender in his official voice was demanding:

"What'll it be, sir— And why'n —— are you here, Washoe— Beer?"

The foaming beverage was placed before him, and the bartender's lower jaw sagged and he sidestepped away several yards, his eyes wide and frightened. In the mirror over the back bar Washoe discovered the cause for the man's alarm.

The tall, slim figure of Gentle George, materializing from nowhere, was stepping up to his side. George called for a cigar in a languid voice. Apparently George had not recognized Washoe yet. The killer's face was thin and pale, the effect being accentuated by long blond mustaches hanging to the line of his chin and half concealing his slit of a mouth. From the nose up George was quite beatific of visage, but the lips, habitually parted to disclose the strong white teeth, suggested the wolf. The long-tailed broadcloth coat concealed all signs of lethal weapons. From the top of his shiny "stove-pipe" hat to the tips of his patent-leather shoes (not boots) he was immaculate.

His natural height was a bit over six feet and seemed more because of his lean figure. The tall hat seemed to add another foot to his stature. He could trust no man, nor any woman. He was doomed to loneliness. Long before there was any territory of Nevada, or any suspicion of the treasure house under Mount Davidson's flanks, he had killed a bad-man. Because of his precise form of speech and his love for subdued finery the homicide gave him something of a reputation. Other bad-men, very vain of their standing, had come forward to wrest his laurels from him; and California counted his victims and looked upon him as an institution.

He was admired at first for his suave manner in meeting a would-be slayer. He was called "Gentle" George. His community was proud of him. Being committed to the red path, he found he never was so lonely as when mingling with men. As champion bad-man he found he was without a gainful occupation. He loved his ease and did not need much gold after his wardrobe was replenished. Then he found he lacked the price of a decent meal. He continued to eat of the best and to leave his host without any explanation, and no victualler was bold enough to complain. But such petty practises hurt his pride.

It was then that he ceased to be a defender of his title and shocked the community by ruthlessly killing a prospector who was guilty of brushing against him. The prospector's claim proved to be worth while and, what was surprizing, proved to be the property of a speculator in lots who had never swung a pick in his life. From then on Gentle George seemed to prosper, and there came a time when a twilight visit and a leisurely worded warning for some miner to quit his claim proved to be as effective as a killing. His career in California was abruptly terminated by the vigilants, and he fled over the mountains and was living in the valley when the canvas and brush settlement of Ophir, later to be called Virginia City, sprang up.

Four waiters hastily advanced to take his order. The request for a glass of water would have aroused derision had another man given it; but never was a connoisseur of rare wines served more attentively than was the killer.

Washoe picked up his glass with his left hand and turned half-around and greeted him:

"Hello, George. They were telling me you had come back from Salt Lake. Anything interesting?"

George smiled wanly and ceased sipping the goblet long enough to reply.

"If it isn't the indomitable Washoe! Interesting? Why, yes and no. I am rather anxious to locate an old fellow known as Sorry Kane. Patrons of mine have an idea he possesses the secret of a rich paying ledge and that he might be induced to part with it at a generous figure."

"He has no ledge. I saw him and his friend Thomas over in Placerville a week or more ago. He had some rich samples he had picked up somewhere, but he couldn't lead you to the spot if you gave him a million."

"That's too bad—for my employers," said George, sipping more water. "That ends my chances for a very liberal commission and leaves me with expense money and a *per diem* wage. If I were speaking for myself your assurance, young Washoe, would terminate my search right here and now. But as I must report back rather

Digitized by Google

exactly it'll be necessary for me to see Mr. Kane in person. Perhaps you could tell me where I can find him?" And the light, almost colorless, eyes were bent on Washoe searchingly.

Washoe was greatly puzzled at the mention of Kane's name. He did not believe George was telling the truth, and yet he was not willing to run the slightest risk of causing trouble for his old friend by sending the killer to him. He shook his head and swallowed some beer, and then remarked:

"They were over the ridge, swapping their ore for a few drinks. They're still over there, or somewhere along the valley. They do no prospecting. If they found a rich ledge they'd swap it for a bottle of whisky or a few pounds of tobacco."

"Don't seem to care for money, I take it. Still I must get in touch with them if possible."

"They come and go like any old bummer."

George fished out a coin and directed the bartender's attention to Washoe's empty glass and tapped his own goblet for more water and lazily remarked—

"Something new for you to be wearing a belt-gun, isn't it?"

"Keeping up with the custom," laughed Washoe. "Only bought it a few days ago."

"Sniffing trouble afar?" And Gentle George twisted the ends of his blond mustache carefully.

"Never can tell," was the light response. "Old man trouble seems to be following my trail rather sharp just now." He reached for his glass, changed his mind and suddenly faced the killer, his thumb hooked in his belt.

"And, George, just what is your game just now? Hitched up with Hawkins? If so you might start in so we can see who's to mess up the floor. No sense in waiting."

Gentle George carefully replaced his goblet and left his hand resting on the bar while he stared at Washoe in mild surprize.

"Bless you," he murmured. "I'm not after *you*. If I were I'd have had you long before this."

"I believe you," muttered Washoe. "Nothing more for me; but won't you have some more water? No? Then I'll say good night and be drifting along."

"First let me ask if your trouble is a secret. You mentioned Hawkins' name."

"Not exactly trouble. Only Hawkins and his friends, and Bill Mayfield and his friends, don't love me any more."

"I enjoy hearing you express yourself. No strength wasted in oaths and threats. Well, trouble will come to the best of us."

WASHOE smiled and nodded a "good night," and with the cold chills running up and down his back committed the tactical error of leaving the bar first. But George showed no more interest in him although it was not until outside that the young man dared to breathe freely. He was deeply puzzled. One moment he was positive George had had no dealings with Hawkins, and in the next he was believing the killer was indulging in finesse. And yet it was not George's way to postpone a murder. When he ran true to form he killed at the first opportunity. He had had his chance at the bar and had passed it up.

Washoe's challenge that they fight it out on the spot would have been an excellent alibi for the killer. Washoe was also convinced that Hawkins was not in the International. His favorite resort was the Magnolia; and, having adopted the theory of facing trouble instead of being dogged by it, Washoe walked toward that saloon to carry the fight into the enemy's camp. If he emerged alive he purposed to hunt up Mayfield and settle all differences with him.

He was very painstaking in his reconnaissance of the saloon and took a position in the deep shadows across the street and for some minutes watched the steady stream of men feeding into the ornate barroom and seeping out again.

Every stratum of the town's society seemed to be represented among the Magnolia's customers; and here also came women, each attended by a dozen rough-booted admirers; women who laughed shrilly and scattered frozen smiles. All these and more passed before the young man's watchful eyes. One class he missed, the gamblers, but these would have arrived early and would remain under cover until dawn. Paiutes, lured from their wikiups around Pyramid Lake by the white man's whisky, were packing in faggots on their backs and taking their pay in liquor and kitchen-waste and kicks. Now and then a "stove-pipe" towered above the head-coverings of the crowd and marked the passing of a sporting man who prided himself on being in the amateur class.

The light from a dance-hall a few doors

Digitized by Google

above the Magnolia brightly illuminated a short section of the cluttered street; and a "stove-pipe" slowly moving through this zone suddenly held Washoe's attention. The long blond mustache hanging below the line of the lower jaw could only belong to Gentle George—the soft-spoken atavism. He was sauntering leisurely, his pale eyes warning all whom he met not to walk too close to him. Those who recognized him took to the outside of the walk. Those behind him pointed him out to others and whispered his name.

Apparently unconscious of the excitement his appearance created, but secretly feeding his vanity upon it, George neared the door of the Magnolia and halted, as if debating whether to enter and enjoy another glass of water, or to pass on to some other resort. As he cared nothing for drink or gaming the saloon offered him nothing beyond an excellent opportunity for showing himself. As he stood in the middle of the walk the passers-by circled around him, and none complained because he obstructed the way.

A man, helping a drunken companion along, recognized the tall, thin figure and tried to steer the helpless one into the road. The drunken man bumped into George, jolting the "stove-pipe" low over the forehead. There was a movement of George's right hand, and the sober man was screaming:

"Don't, George! For God's sake don't! He's blind drunk. He's my brother! Let me take him home!"

George hesitated, his hand under the tail of his long coat, the feral stare of the pale eyes boring into the stupid face of the drunkard and driving fear into the benumbed brain. The offender opened his mouth in terror, but made no sound as he lurched away, his brother keeping behind him and interposing his body as a shield. George removed his hat and brushed it and resumed his deliberations.

A Paiute, with a heavy load of faggots on his back and unsteady from liquor, came staggering down the street and smashed into the killer and knocked him violently against the side of the saloon. Almost before the tall form hit the boards there came a detonation and the Indian went down on his face and kicked once or twice. George once more brushed his hat and settled it at the proper angle, wiped his fingers on a snowy handkerchief, and swung into the saloon.

"God! But that's devil's work!" muttered Washoe, nauseated by the cold-blooded murder.

The street filled up again. By the time Washoe crossed to the front of the saloon the body of the Indian had been removed. Washoe entered the long barroom, took a position against the walls and looked about him. The bar was crowded, many of the drinkers boasting of their innumerable ledges—one-ledge and two-ledge men upholding their respective theories almost to the point of homicide. Feet were being traded, worth millions of dollars if the traders' estimates were accepted at face value. Scarcely any money changed hands, and fully ninety per cent. of the "mines" named were scarcely more than holes—shallow at that. But no man knew where luck would be found, and an assortment of feet were eagerly collected in the hope that out of the accumulation Destiny might select one claim that would be worth a fortune.

Lem Bowers had owned ten feet in the undiscovered Comstock ledge when he married his wife. By chance she had owned ten feet in the same ledge, paid for with money earned by running a boarding-house for Gold Cañon miners in the Winter of 1855. Now both were enormously rich with neither possessing any knowledge of financial problems. The town might laugh at the simple good-natured couple and at the same time learn a lesson from their good fortune. See how luck had enriched the Bowers, who bought feet blindly. So the silver-mad town swapped feet in fantastically named claims for others equally as absurdly called.

Gentle George stood in the middle of the room, running his sharp gaze over the gesticulating, shouting mob. At one end of the bar stood Bill Mayfield and three of his men. Three feet of precious space separated them from the regular traffic, and none knowingly encroached beyond the dead-line. Although the pressure was great and the drink-dispensers were too few for adequate service, one man in white-apron remained solely to serve the quartet. This homage to Mayfield nettled George. He advanced and stepped into the vacant space. Mayfield, discovering some one had intruded did not bother to glance at the offender, but harshly snarled—

"Git to —— out of here!"

Digitized by Google

"Are you addressing me, Mr. Mayfield?" quietly inquired George, his pale eyes becoming as opaque in appearance as marble.

The man on Mayfield's left nudged the desperado. Mayfield turned his head and gave a little start on beholding the killer.

"Didn't know it was you, George," he sullenly explained. "Have a drink."

"I prefer drinking alone," coldly informed the killer. This refusal was in itself an insult the desperado would not have tolerated in an ordinary man. "I am assuming you and your friends are leaving," continued George.

Mayfield bit his lips and inwardly cursed the killer. Could he be sure his companions would stand by him he might have chanced the issue, for he was in a beastly mood. But George had taken them by surprize and none of the three henchmen had had time to fortify their nerves. Mayfield was doubly incensed because the loud talk and laughter had suddenly ceased, and he knew the room was witnessing his discomfiture. He endeavored to pass it off by heartily replying:

"We was just goin'. Won't ye come along and take a hand?"

"You know I never gamble," replied George without glancing at him. Then to the frozen-faced bartender— "A glass of water, please."

Mayfield swaggered to the door of the dance-hall back of the barroom, his small eyes glowing with murder as he swept the faces of those he passed. But no man seemed to see him excepting Washoe, who could not keep his lips from smiling. Nothing short of murder could lessen Mayfield's hot rage, and he came to a halt. He had saved up Washoe's affront at Strawberry Flat and had planned to deal with him in Virginia. But the score, until now, was one that had lost nothing through postponement. He felt the lust to obliterate life surge through his brain; then came a curious lapse. Washoe was still smiling, albeit in a mechanical manner.

No amount of whisky could entirely impair Mayfield's animal cunning. If approached in his sleep his hand would reach for a gun before he was awake. And now, at the point of risking his skill on the draw against the young man's, he was remembering George at the bar behind him. Instantly he was convinced George and Washoe were allies. Washoe's presence in the room and his position commanding the bar, added to his adoption of a belt-gun, all fitted in with George's deliberate attempt to pick a quarrel. George was to have started the fight and Washoe was to second the attack with a fusillade of lead from the rear. Mayfield relaxed, his small eyes becoming worried. He turned his head and beheld George leaning negligently against the bar, a goblet of water in his hand, watching the scene with quiet amusement. Mayfield swung on his heel and passed on. A minute later Washoe went out.

GENTLE GEORGE was now in excellent humor. He had reestablished his importance. He had driven Bill Mayfield and his friends from the Magnolia bar. It would be discussed from the Flowery Diggings to Genoa by morning. The man in the white apron remained to refill the goblet did the killer's leisurely sipping ever empty it. Mayfield had been accorded three feet of empty bar to suit his privacy. No one intruded within a dozen feet of George. But the killer had a motive in remaining in the place behind the prompting of vanity. Being neither gambler, trader, nor speculator, he was low in funds. Business had brought him to the Comstock ledge and success would reward him with several thousand dollars. But until he accomplished his purpose he had nothing but bare expense money.

Replacing the half-emptied glass on the bar and shooting a glance at the mirror to make sure no enemy lurked behind him, he tersely demanded—

"The manager."

"You want the manager, sir?" faltered the bartender.

"I'm waiting."

The man scurried away and soon returned with the portly genius of the place.

"You was asking for me, George?" pleasantly greeted the proprietor.

The room was watching the development of the new scene. "Monte Jack," somewhat irrepressible because of youth, whispered to a neighbor:

"Even money George draws on him. Two to one he shoots if he draws. Fifty to one he kills if he shoots."

"I sent for you," corrected George.

He raised the goblet and took another swallow of water. The manager waited, his gaze apprehensive and his fat jowls inclined

Digitized by Google

to quiver. Putting down the goblet, George quietly explained:

"A client of mine, on this street, while digging a cellar under his shack, struck a ledge of color. He intends to follow all dips, spurs and angles. The ledge seems to extend along the whole street. He wished for me to ask you if you will quit, trade, or shoot."

In the preceding year there had been several instances of frantic excitement over similar fantastic "discoveries," the mining law being paramount. The manager knew he was being "held up," but he quickly replied:

"I'll be glad to trade, George. What does he consider to be a fair figure?"

He was careful not to hurt George's feelings by asking for the claimant's name.

Dropping his hand to his side, George replied:

"Five hundred dollars. If the indications were stronger he wouldn't skip this section of the street for a hundred thousand."

"If you will come into the office I'll get the money. Or shall I bring it out here?"

George motioned for him to lead the way and sauntered after him down the room. They entered the small room reserved for the proprietor's private use and smiling gaily the proprietor counted out five hundred dollars in gold, which the killer distributed among his pockets. Then the proprietor said:

"That's for your client, George. Now I wonder if I couldn't be your client for a bit?"

"Talk."

"It'll be worth three hundred more to me if I can be protected from any false claims of discovery being used to oust me from this property. Now that the crowd knows your client had struck signs there's sure to be some who will try to bluff me."

"I should say it would be worth five hundred for you to be protected against any false claims," said George.

"Five hundred it is," heartily declared the proprietor.

"I'll leave it here till I need it," said George. "And by the way, it might be wise to have a man dig a hole under this building until he hits a rock. Record your notice. If any one bothers you claim prior discovery. If that isn't sufficient, send for me."

He passed through the barroom and looked about for Washoe. Leaving the Magnolia, he visited a dozen other resorts in hope of finding the young man, but was unsuccessful.

Had he gone across the street he would have come upon Washoe, hiding in the shadows and waiting to discover Hawkins. Neither the gambler, nor his friends, showed up at the Magnolia entrance and Washoe was about to visit some of the other gambling-saloons when he caught a glimpse of a woman dressed in the Mexican fashion, accompanied by several men who vied in bending over the high comb set in the coils of black hair. Darting across the street, Washoe intercepted the group before it had entered the open door and touched the young woman on the arm. Her escort would have resented the intrusion had not the woman greeted him by name.

"Sorry to bother," muttered Washoe. "But you can do me a good turn, Mexico."

Mexico, as she was called because of her dress and descent, clutched his arm and regardless of her scowling escort drew him below the entrance and into the shadows.

"Go way, Washoe!" she hissed. "Go way! They will keel you."

"I want to find out if Hawkins is in the back room off the gambling-hall," he told her.

"Go way! Señor Hawkins is a devil!"

"Well, if you won't find out I must go in and look. I can't go away until I know."

"Ah!" and enlightenment shone in the dusky eyes. "That is to be wise. To run 'way and run into Señor Hawkins would be out of the head. A good boy you are. You will soon know."

She ran back to her grumbling escort and shrilly cursed them out in Spanish and reduced them to a proper plane of humbleness, then led them into the main gambling-hall and asked a question of the faro-dealer. Returning to the street she found Washoe and eagerly whispered:

"*Si.* He has been there long. He is there now. Go way. Like the boy it is good."

"And you're a good girl, Mexico," he told her. "Your ideas and mine don't hitch, but your heart is all right."

She nodded her small head rapidly, timidly patted his lean cheek and ran back into the hall. Washoe waited, so that her entrance might not be associated with his arrival, and then made direct for the gambling-hall. His purpose was to face

Digitized by Google

Hawkins and conclude the feud between them before encountering Mayfield. He had convinced himself that either he must take to flight or take the initiative this night and by boldness reduce the heavy odds. This had been the motive for his stealthy entrance to the town; to take the enemy by surprize.

It was too early for the games to be on in full blast and only a few scattered groups of habitués, including ten or a dozen painted women, were present. Washoe was halfway across the hall before Mexico saw him. With a fluttering little cry she broke away from a ring of admirers and ran to him and hissed:

"Mother of God! You do not know my words! I said he is in there!" She glanced round-eyed at the closed door. "Go'way! go'way!"

He gently brushed her aside and advanced to the door, and with a hand on his hip quickly entered and closed the door behind him.

To his dismay he beheld not only Hawkins, Planter, and Moses, whom he had expected to find together, but Mayfield and his three followers also—seven men—and all were fighting men, experts with knife and gun. He had walked into a trap. The astonishment of the seven men was as great as his, and as he leaned against the door and forced his lips into a smile there was no one there who suspected the flurry of fear assailing his heart.

"Evening, folks," he saluted. "I was told I'd find you all here. Nothing like getting every one together when you want to talk things over."

THE three gamblers and Mayfield were playing cards at a table. Mayfield's three satellites were at another table at the end of the room, busy passing the bottle. The card game was for meager stakes, the four men really being in conference. The blank amazement on Mayfield's brutal visage gradually was succeeded by an expression of fear. Hawkins' features were more impassive, but even he betrayed uneasiness.

Washoe was puzzled. He had looked for fierce exultation and a crowd assault. But none of the four men moved to draw a weapon, and the three hangers-on were waiting for their cue before becoming demonstrative.

Hawkins was the first to speak, and he gritted—

"If your friend is outside he might as well come in."

Washoe remained silent, striving to solve the problem. The enemy, evidently, was conceding him an advantage. He wondered of what it consisted. Mayfield furnished the enlightenment by huskily declaring:

"George didn't have to have ye back of him to play 'look-out.' Me'n my men wa'n't there to take any fight to him. He didn't oughter climb me like that in the bar."

So it was the sinister shadow of Gentle George that was holding off an attack in force.

"I'm quite alone just now. If you have any trouble to settle with George I know he'll be pleased to accommodate you," Washoe said slowly.

"An' I say again I ain't got no trouble with him," passionately declared Mayfield. "Some one's been telling some rotten lies about me to him."

"Well, you can explain that to him. It's nothing to me," replied Washoe. "I've got lots of work to attend to, and I decided I'd take the evening off and clean the slate before buckling down to business. There was a bit of a fuss between you and me, Bill, at Strawberry. And, Hawkins, there's that crooked game you and your friends tried on me at Carson. I've waited till I could find you all together."

Hawkins stared at him admiringly and softly said:

"Well, you've found us altogether. We only lack George. Where is he?"

Washoe shrugged his shoulders and retorted:

"I don't know. I'm not keeping track of George."

"But you happened to meet him in the International bar and drink with him. And you happened to follow him into the bar outside when he told Mayfield to move on."

"It just happened. I'm here on my own business. I'm playing a lone hand."

"So was George when he climbed me at the bar and you stood back with a new gun on yer hip," muttered Mayfield.

"Then to your business," said Hawkins, placing both hands palms down on the table as an evidence of his peaceful purpose. "The card game went all your own way. There's nothing left to be wiped off the

Digitized by Google

slate. There were words spoken; but they were only words. If you want to call it quits, I'm willing. I don't believe you'll go out on the street and say I've lost my sand because I make this talk. But there's no profit in a fight between us. I never shall learn to love you, Washoe, but how I feel can't hurt a man."

"Then I'm to understand that it isn't a case of shoot on sight when we next meet."

"Not unless you start the shooting. No matter what I said, or how I felt in Carson, that's all ended. Times are changing. It's new diggings for card-men in a year or so, much quicker if there's too much gun-play. My only game is to increase my stake before I drift on."

"Planter and Moses, how about you?" sharply asked Washoe.

"I'm no gun-man. I play cards," snarled Moses.

Planter's broad face beamed most amiably as he warmly declared.

"Why, ——, Washoe! I always liked you. Why, my boy, you could walk ahead of me unarmed through Devil's Gate in the night, and I wouldn't hurt a hair of your head. I agree with Hawkins that we oughter make hay while the sun shines. We'll have to move on soon enough. School for children on South C Street and another on D Street. Public school to be started soon. One gospel slinger is already holding services, and now I hear on the street that the legislators next month will vote down the bill that would legalize dueling! Dueling against the law if that bill don't pass! I reckon it's high time we all moved on. Let's all take a drink and call it square."

"I must have a word with Bill first. I've a notion he's nursing a grudge against me."

Mayfield tried to smile and shook his head.

"You riled me," he frankly declared. "But that's all gone by now. I reckon ye was sort of uppish back at Strawberry; but I was in licker at the time. I ain't one of them goody-goody fellers what thinks he's always right."

"Handsomely said, Bill!" cried Planter, smacking a fat hand on the table and gazing benevolently at the desperado. "You're one of nature's noblemen in the rough. And so here we are, old pards all, and better pards for having a little difference and then smoothing it up handsomely like. And we're very dry. You, gentlemen in the corner with the bottles, please accommodate us."

One of the men came forward with a bottle. Glasses were filled and Washoe drank standing, tipping the glass but not his head. He could imagine what move Hawkins and Mayfield would make when they discovered he was not backed by George. However, he felt better for having shown himself. The next meeting would find him possessing more confidence. Returning the glass to the table, he said:

"I'm glad we've had this little talk. It clears the air. Good night, gentlemen."

The door closed and the men stared at each other in silence for a minute. Hawkins began to frame a speech when the door moved slightly. Hawkins pushed back his chair and drew a gun, holding it on his knee. Then the face of a waiter was thrust through the opening. With a curse Hawkins lifted the bottle to hurl at the cringing creature, but Moses caught his arm and commanded—

"Come in here!"

The fellow sidled in, his face screwed up with fear.

"Mister Washoe sent me in with this with his com'liments," he faltered, setting a bottle on the table.

"Where is Washoe now?" asked Hawkins.

"Out. Went right out on the street after tossing a slug on the bar and telling me to fetch this in here to you gentlemen."

"And Gentle George? Did he go with him, or stay?"

"But Mister George quit the place some time ago," explained the waiter. "He went out right after Mister Mayfield was talking with him at the bar. He ain't been back since."

Mayfield let out a sullen roar. Hawkins darted a puzzled glance at his intimates, and motioned the waiter to retire. After the door was closed the gambler snarled:

"—— him! He had the gall to come in here alone! George wasn't even in the house."

"George is backing his game," barked Moses, picking up the cards and shuffling them. "And so long's he's doing that he can be at the north pole and I won't look cross-eyed at that young feller."

"I wish I knew that," gritted Hawkins. "But what if he isn't? Then the pup has bluffed the seven of us into stuffing our cards into the discard with nary a peep."

"Haven't I told ye that he was playing

Digitized by Google

look-out for George when George talked to me at the bar?" hoarsely demanded Mayfield.

"He talked to you to the point all right," chuckled Planter, with a wink to Hawkins which Mayfield caught. "You didn't stop to find out if he had any guns on. Pards, if George isn't hooked up with him then we're the laughing-stock of the town and might as well pack our carpet-bags and take the first coach east. Come to think of it, all we've had to go on was what Mayfield came in here and bleated."

"And the word sent from the International about the two drinking together," snapped Moses.

"Standing at the same bar don't always mean two men are pards," insisted Planter. "Moses says George is sitting in with Washoe. I don't believe it. I play that young feller to come in here to have it out with us while he could get the jump on us. Reckon he didn't count poor old Bill in. For he saw him shooed out the barroom and must 'a' seen him and his friends trailing in here."

"Planter, I don't like yer talk," said Mayfield in a husky voice. "Yer tongue is too keerless to suit me."

"Mayfield, you've got the four of us in borrasca. You fetched a yarn here about George and Washoe working together. I reckon you simply lost your sand and quit the game cold and told that yarn just to save your ugly face," slowly replied Planter, his big face taking on an expression far from amiable.

Mayfield breathed heavily, his small eyes glowing as he stared into the big gambler's sneering face. His followers at the end of the room watched the scene expectantly. With stinging incisiveness Planter continued:

"You quit cold, Mayfield. You had part of your gang at your back and you let one man bluff you out of your boots. Then you come scooting in here with a wild yarn, trying to cover up, and in comes Washoe and bluffs us all out of our boots. You quit cold and ate dirt."

"By ——! I don't quit for no fat lummox like ye are!" roared Mayfield, kicking up his leg and pulling a gun from his boot.

PLANTER had been waiting for some such maneuver, and a .41 derringer appeared in his fat hand as though it had been reposing there all the evening. He was first to pull trigger, but the derringer missed fire. Not so with Mayfield's .36 Colt. And as its booming voice filled the room Planter's portly form gave a jerk, his head went back and his broad face reflected great surprize. Then he collapsed and with a mighty crash fell on his face on the floor.

"—— you! You've done for him! The best decoy we ever had!" snarled Moses.

Mayfield leaned forward, his eyes exulting. Satisfied his man was dead, he turned on Hawkins, who by this time was covered, together with Moses, by the guns of Mayfield's followers. Hawkins wet his dry lips and clasped his hands before him on the table. Moses continued shuffling the cards, somewhat dazed by the sudden tragedy. The shot and fall of the heavy body had startled the gamesters in the hall, although pistol shots were of common occurrence in the town and in the Magnolia. But no one ventured near the closed door.

"You fellows put up your guns. Put up your gun, Bill. Planter was laying for you, it seems. He got what he was asking for."

"He won't lay for nobody else," panted Mayfield. "I done for him."

"Washoe did for him," corrected Hawkins.

Mayfield gasped in amazement. Moses turned his head and smiled slightly. Hawkins rapidly explained:

"You've got enough notches without this one, Bill. Planter has some fast-shooting friends."

"Ye start in then an' try to even up——"

"Don't act the fool because you're half-drunk," sharply rebuked Hawkins. "Word must get out that Washoe did for our friend on the floor. The men and women out in the hall are my friends. They'll say what they're told to say. It's known that Washoe came in here looking for trouble. The street will believe he did it. We'll pretend we don't want to talk. We'll refuse to say right out whether he did or didn't. Just say it was a private row. Citizens will lose interest, but Planter's friends will get busy. Then the word gets to Planter's woman, 'French' Fannie. She's a devil in petticoats. I'd rather have George after me than her. Washoe goes under, pegs out. If George is his friend let him look to Planter's friends and French Fannie. We've stood pat. We haven't blamed Washoe."

Mayfield frowned in bewilderment, then

Digitized by Google

grinned wolfishly, thrust his gun into his boot and muttered:

"Ye've got a head on ye, Hawkins. If I had yer head I'd be pres'dent of these here United States of th' Confed'racy. Yes, sirree! George can't blame us if a woman, or some of Planter's friends, sends Washoe to the Hill. Ye've got a head, Hawkins. What'll we do now?"

"Nothing till only the regulars are left in the hall! Yes; we'll do this. One of your men must go out and look around for George. For if he happens to be with Washoe and can furnish him an alibi we must keep our mouths shut, except to send word to French Fannie by one of the women."

Mayfield growled an order and one of his henchmen unwillingly set forth on his errand. At the end of half an hour he came back and reported that George had hired a rig before the time of Washoe's departure from the back room and had driven to Gold Hill. Hawkins was surprized and glanced inquiringly at Moses. The latter snarled:

"Reckon I was wrong. Reckon we're all wrong except *him*." And he nodded toward the dead man. "The two weren't running together. Just happened to look that way. George has big business here. Nothing to do with Washoe. Boy bluffed us."

Hawkins drummed his fingers on the table and turned it over in his shrewd mind. Finally he said:

"I'm ashamed to say I think Moses is right and that Planter had the right of it. But we'll play it sure. Say nothing about Planter. No one must know what's happened until he's found dead in front of his room. I'll arrange so he'll be found there tomorrow morning. Then word will be whispered to his woman that Washoe did it. I'll have a talk with George when he comes back. French Fannie will do for Washoe before George comes back. With Washoe dead George can't have any interest in him. Washoe kept in hiding till George arrived. Maybe it just happened, the two meeting; but we'll take no chances."

CHAPTER V

GEORGE PURSUES HIS QUEST

THE discovery of Planter's body caused scarcely a ripple of excitement. Washoe heard of the tragedy before he left his room on D Street, his landlord, returning from the night shift in the Ophir, bringing the news. Washoe was much puzzled. He could only assume that toward early morning Planter had been embroiled in a street row while walking home. Washoe was informed by his landlord that neither of the dead man's derringers had been discharged, and he took it for granted Planter was taken unawares. That robbery was not the motive was indicated by Planter's money and jewelry being found intact. There was a likelihood, Washoe's informant argued, that thieves had attacked the gambler and had been frightened away before they could secure the loot.

On his way to his favorite restaurant he heard no comments on the homicide; but after his breakfast was served the waiter confidentially told him that no revolver-shots were heard in the street by Planter's woman. From the same source Washoe learned how the under-world was seething with excitement over the murder and that many theories were being whispered about bagnios and gambling-hells. What was peculiar, declared the waiter, was a general belief that some sort of a quarrel had taken place in the back room at the Magnolia, although Kell Hawkins had declared Planter left the place between two and three in the morning and appeared to be in his usual excellent spirits.

Washoe had planned to secure a horse and ride out to the Flowery Diggings some five miles east of the town, but before doing this he proceeded to inform Matilda Jaimson that it might be some time before her father arrived in Carson City. He wrote the letter in the restaurant and explained how her father had struck very rich indications and had paid Thomas to send her a line to that effect. He was careful to explain that her failure to receive the letter was due to her being on her way to cross the mountains at the time the message was posted. He allowed to stand the fiction about the money deposited to her credit with Daws. Giving the letter to the waiter to mail, he repaired to the stable on C Street and procured a horse. John Blackburn had just ridden in and was curious to learn what had happened in the Magnolia bar; for if the town was indifferent to Planter's death it was very much alive to Gentle George's temerity in driving Bill Mayfield and his followers from the bar, and the affair was being widely discussed.

Digitized by Google

After Washoe had furnished the desired facts, and had added an account of his own meeting with the killer, Blackburn pursed his lips thoughtfully and remarked:

"It's mighty queer about George's coming back here. I don't take any stock in his saying he represents Salt Lake investors. They might hire him to kill a lucky prospector, but never to negotiate for a claim. He arrived at Gold Hill last night. I didn't see him, but he quizzed the night-man about Kane. Seems very keen to find him. I left this morning before he was up."

"But what can be his errand with Kane if it doesn't concern a silver ledge?"

"That's what has me guessing. As a rule George's errands are rather deadly."

Washoe laughed, scoffing the suggestion that any one could bear a grudge against Sorry Kane.

"Why, Sorry's too lazy to ever make an enemy."

"So? Then what is he scared of? What has he been scared of ever since he first came to this valley; and that was when you were a grasshopper? Why does he hide?"

"He's shy, but I never reckoned he was hiding from any one," slowly answered Washoe, the smile leaving his face.

"Yet you seldom see him wandering around on this side of the ridge. He's more free to walk among folks when he gets over Placerville way. While here he keeps close. Thomas goes to the east quite a distance, but Kane never goes with him. The man's scared of something. Yet there's another something that's keeping him on this side of the Sierras."

Washoe puckered his brows and recalled Kane's recital of the lost city. He had been pursued by something "worse'n Injuns." While racing from the unnamed peril and traveling down the Smoky Valley he had feared death was keeping abreast of him on the western side of the Toiyabe Range. It was this fear that had driven him into the waste-lands where he had picked up the circlet of gold.

"See here, John," Washoe abruptly began. "Kane is harmless. I don't believe he ever did anything wrong. But I'll admit there's some mystery about him. But what we don't know about his history is his own affair. He and Thomas did me a good turn. I wish you'd do this for me; when you go back to Gold Hill keep on to within two miles of Silver City and drop in on the two men. They're living in an abandoned tunnel back quite a bit from the road. Tell them I sent you. Tell Kane that George is looking for him. If they're away leave a line of writing so they'll get the word. Will you do that for me?"

"Glad to, Washoe. I'll be riding back tonight, or tomorrow. I knew they were denning up somewhere along there. Tell me what you think about Planter's death."

"Must have been a street fight, only Planter didn't have time to get started. Yet it's queer he could be killed in front of his room and no shots heard."

"Doc Trevers, who examined the body, told me in Winn's eating-house that the man had been dead for more than twelve hours. He fixes the killing at some time last evening. Of course that means he wasn't killed near his room."

"That's amazing!" muttered Washoe. "He was alive enough when I saw him in the back room of the Magnolia last night."

"That's the part you left out," murmured Blackburn, eying his friend curiously.

"I'll make a clean breast of it," said Washoe with a shame-faced grin. "I'd told it in the first place, but sounds foolish."

He gave an outline of his adventure and frankly confessed he was scared when he found himself confronting seven men who were hostile to him.

"I thought I was running into Hawkins and his gang. What saved my hide was their belief that George was backing me and somewhere near to take up the fight."

In rich disgust Blackburn cried:

"You must have spells when you're a plain fool, Washoe. Only an idiot would go into that den and risk getting out alive."

"But I've told you I was reckoning on finding only Hawkins and his friends."

"*Only* Hawkins and his friends! Blue clay! It's lucky you weren't found dead in front of your room this morning. Hawkins is worse than Mayfield. Has more brains. As for their saying they have no fight to take to you, you believe them when you find you can trust a rattlesnake not to bite you while you're cuffing him around. But if I was you I wouldn't say anything about seeing Planter last night."

"Probably I won't have any call to. But what harm could it do?"

Blackburn twisted his black mustache fiercely and whispered—

"They might say you did it."

Digitized by Google

"Nonsense!" growled Washoe, the suggestion making him feel extremely ill at ease. "He was alive and hearty when I left the room. Besides, he never had a chance for his life. Both pocket guns loaded. No one would dare say I shot a man down in cold blood."

"Some folks dare say anything," corrected Blackburn. "Here's a little secret: Marshal Robinson and Doc Trevers were eating together this morning. The marshal told me that Planter had pulled trigger on one of his derringers and that it missed fire. He was shot through the heart. He was first on the draw and would have nailed his man if his derringer had worked."

"Confound it, John, you'll be making me believe I did shoot him," ruefully remarked Washoe, his state of mind growing more perturbed. "Anyway, there's no hitching up my visit to the back room with his death as yet."

"That's a fact, or I'd have heard it," agreed the deputy marshal. "But Planter had friends. They're keeping quiet, but they'll never let the matter drop. No knowing what they're thinking and planning this minute. Watch your corners when you get back."

The hostler came back to shadows where they were standing and in a low voice said—

"There's a woman out front who wants to speak to you most keen like, Mister Washoe."

"What, what, Washoe! Our immaculate pattern being chased by women?" rebuked Blackburn.

Washoe grinned in embarrassment and insisted: "Nothing secret about it, John. Come along and watch us meet."

Blackburn firmly refused to intrude and reminded him that three was a crowd and busied himself with his horse. Washoe was gone some ten minutes and when he returned his voice was harsh and unnatural as he announced:

"John, the devil seems to be waiting for his pay. Now I'm scared in dead earnest. It's a case where my new guns won't help me any."

"Maybe my old ones will," was the deputy's quiet reply.

"No! A woman is hunting for me to kill me. Now if that ain't a —— of a fix!"

"Why didn't she try it out front?"

"That's not the one. That's a friend. The one they call Mexico. She seems to think she owes me for digging up Doc Trevers last spring and making him tend out on her when she was down with a lung-cold. She's hunted all over town for me. The waiter at the restaurant told her I was here to get a horse. She trailed me——"

"Strike color! Strike color!" growled Blackburn.

"I'm trying to. French Fannie, Planter's woman, has taken the war-path after yours truly. She believes I killed Planter. Now what can a man do in a case like that?"

"Ride for it, and ride —— fast! Don't wait to try to explain. Just scoot. I'd rather have George after me than that woman. You can shoot back at a man if you get a chance. Some one who has it in for you must have told her that yarn."

"Exactly. Some one got word to her quick. She told Mexico early this morning. Seems there's a game on after all."

"You climb on a horse and ride for it!" snapped Blackburn. "You stay out to the Diggings till you get word to come back. Have the hostler here tell folks you've gone to Carson City and may cross the ridge. You can trust him?"

"He'll tell what I tell him to."

"I thought so. You won't have to stay out there more'n a day or two. I'll have Robinson talk to the woman and make her understand she's after the wrong man. Then he or I will send word to you. I'd try my talk on her, but she'll take more stock in the marshal. Now I want to see you on your way before I leave this stable."

Washoe mounted in the stable, and feeling more afraid than if he had known that Hawkins and Mayfield were waiting for him he sent the horse darting through the big door and down the slope. But there was no half-crazed woman lying in wait, and he soon slowed down to a decent pace.

FLOWERY DIGGINGS was a desolation of bowlders, dumps, frame shacks and tents. Here were located the Rodgers, the Mammoth, the Morning Star, Nary Red, Marco Polo, Cedar, Desert, and Lady Bryant companies. And there were others persistently struggling to attain at least a speculative fame. The miners of this district depended on Virginia City for their social life, and the exodus on Saturday nights was almost all-inclusive. After caring for his horse Washoe went to

Digitized by Google

Frank's bar, where the atmosphere was thoroughly masculine, and listened to the gossip preliminary to making a round of the ledges.

The conversation had little to do with gaming and women, but aside from that it was a repetition of what one would hear in the Virginia City resorts. Of the blue and red-shirted throng at the bar scarcely one who babbled about anything except ledges, lodes, leads and feet. This mine was a bonanza strike. That mine was in borrasca. Hot arguments ensued, for although the men actually engaged in getting out the ore might become enraged at a superintendent to the point of tying him to the main hoisting cable and of elevating and lowering him in a most disconcerting manner yet they were loyal to their employers and stoutly maintained their respective mines were far richer than the Ophir, the Californian, or the Mexican on the Comstock lode.

Washoe entered while a banker from Montgomery Street was lavishly buying drinks for the rough-garbed gathering and taking his pay in tittle-tattle. For a distance of twenty miles the whole country, north, east and south had been staked out. During the first rush to the diggings the year before it had been hysterically claimed that every foot of the diggings was "reeking with wealth"; and those who were not foot-loose had hired prospectors to go for them. The assayers had flocked in with their small tents, furnaces, crucibles, bottles of acid and hammers. And it was not of record that any specimen submitted to any of these competing gentlemen was ever found to be lacking in "indications" at the least. Washoe was principally interested in new claims, where the hazard was great and high fortune always a possibility.

The bartender intimated to the San Francisco banker that Washoe was rather knowing in matters pertaining to the diggings and then brought the two together. Washoe soon disposed of a few feet in several dubious claims and then casually remarked:

"I don't suppose you'd care to take a gamble. I figure you as one who sticks to dead-sure things."

The banker's acumen had been somewhat mellowed by repeated potations, and he answered—

"If it wouldn't cost me any more than my last night at poker in Virginia I might be tempted."

"I had in mind fifty feet in the Gopher Hole claim. I hold a hundred feet in it and have been holding back until they sink a shaft. They struck ledge near the top and the assayer found it looks mighty promising. I haven't the least idea whether there's a solid ledge of silver, or just some streaks. If any one wants to gamble on it I'll average my investment by selling fifty feet. Billings the assayer, is just around the corner. He can tell you what he found if you're interested."

The banker was in an expansive mood and at once urged a visit to the assayer. Washoe escorted him to a small shed where Billings slept and ruined his digestion with beans fried in grease and hot saleratus bread. The assayer was alone. He had been drinking heavily of Mack's Bitters to alleviate chronic dyspepsia, and was half-seas over. Washoe fastened his impelling gaze on the sallow face and impressively announced:

"Mr. Billings, this is my friend. I have no secrets from him. I want you to tell him just what you think of the Gopher Hole claim. It looked promising when I was last here. I want him to have the truth if anything new has developed. If the bottom has dropped out, say so."

Despite the strong alcoholic contents of the bitters Mr. Billings writhed under a severe attack of pain, took another generous drink and earnestly declared:

"Then he shall have the whole truth, Mr. Washoe. Early this very morning they struck a ledge that makes the Gopher look like a bonanza. If you can possibly get any more feet in that claim, Mr. Washoe, I advise you to jump in the limit."

Washoe, while a trader, was not entirely without compassion; and he qualified the assayer's endorsement by reminding the banker—

"A claim is always talked big, you know."

"This claim is big," loudly insisted Billings, grimacing under a fresh attack. "You asked for the honest truth, and you've got it." And he twisted his face and winked violently and was nearly detected by the banker.

The Montgomery Street gentleman pursed his lips, estimated how much he probably would lose if he succumbed to gaming temptations in Virginia that night, and decided—

Digitized by Google

"I'll keep clear of cards for two or three days and take the fifty at seventy-five a foot."

"If some don't, others will," cryptically muttered Washoe Then firmly, "It's bonanza, or borrasca. My price is a hundred."

The banker caught a sniff of the bitters, smacked his lips approvingly and filled a glass and tossed it off.

"All right," he cried. "In for two-bits, in for a dollar. Give me a place to write."

Washoe almost felt a twinge of conscience as the check was being made out. He evaded the pantomimic grimaces of Billings which he interpreted to mean great joy. To sell a man feet in the Gopher Hole, when the man was sober, was almost questionable; to peddle the sterile feet to one amiably in drink lapped over the border of decency. However, he could not back out, and he accepted the check, passed title to the footage, and endeavored to sooth his conscience by saying:

"May not be worth anything, you know. There's some silver there. Must be. Silver everywhere around here. But it costs to get it out. Want to walk down and look at it and learn the worst?"

The banker was neither curious, nor anxious. The bitters had a new tang for his jaded palate and he was agreeable to investigating the bottle deeper. Relieved to be clear of his victim Washoe walked down to the Mammoth, spoke a few words with the foreman and learned nothing, and passed on. At last he reached the Gopher Hole and was surprized to find quite a gathering around the claim.

"Some one hurt?" he asked of a bushy-faced fellow who was staring intently at the shallow shaft.

"Hurt? Naw. Boys struck a rich ledge first thing this morning. This mine'll beat anything ever uncovered in these diggings."

Incredulous, yet startled, Washoe hastily investigated, and grinned ruefully as he realized that the assayer had done as requested. He had told the whole truth. With a wry face Washoe started to work his way down a dump, slipped and bumped his head on a rock, and lost his senses. He came to to find them throwing water over him. But it was some time before he cared to venture on his feet. Finally he dizzily made his way back to the assayer's shack. The banker was gone.

"Found it just as I said, didn't you, Washoe?" eagerly asked Billings. "I tried to signal you to go slow even if the gentleman was your friend and you wanted to help him out. I knew you wanted to put him on to something good, but this did seem a bit too rich to feed out even to a friend. However, that's your business. Not many men would be that generous even to a friend."

"You spoke by the book, Billings," sighed Washoe. "Always tell the truth and remain poor. Now you must fix me up tonight with a shake-down. Got a tunk on my head and I'll try to sleep it off."

GENTLE GEORGE was a quaint figure in his long-tailed coat and tall hat as he sedately rode his hired horse over the stage-road. Had he been other than George his appearance would have induced smiles. But his coming had been heralded, and there no symptoms of amusement exhibited when he passed groups of miners. It pleased his vanity to realize he was of enough importance to occasion telegraphic attention. At Gold Hill he stayed for a night and approved of the bartender's attentions, although he drank water only. The bartender, however, knew nothing specific about Sorry Kane beyond that he lived somewhere near Silver City or Carson City with Feeble Thomas. Talk in the valley now had it that neither of the two men had found any ledge, but had either stolen the ore, or had picked it up where some drunken prospector had dropped it. Yet George was not cast down by this adverse information. He announced that he would not believe gossip either way until he had questioned Kane; and he made other endeavors to learn where he could find his man. Of but one fact did his investigation convince him—when buying supplies Kane and Thomas went to Dayton or Carson City, as they never were known to make any purchases at Gold Hill or Virginia.

"They don't seem to have no use for Virginia, sir," commented the night-man as he industriously polished the bar in front of his celebrated customer.

On the next day George leisurely rode over the rough and hilly road to Silver City, passing by the spot where Washoe had been conducted from the road to the abandoned tunnel. The killer spent the day in Silver City and received most courteous attention;

Digitized by Google

Silver City was very busy and had not kept track of the two men. They came to town occasionally and bought flour and tobacco, but it was said they did the bulking of their trading at Dayton and Carson City.

Like Gold Hill the town no longer believed either Kane or Thomas had done any prospecting, let alone found a ledge. It was known that the man who crossed the ridge with them, from Placerville had been satisfied of the uselessness of his quest and had returned to Sacramento. George seemed to be in no way disturbed at what must prove to be bad news to his employers. He persisted in his efforts to find some one to guide him to Kane. He was unsuccessful. The proprietor of the leading saloon earnestly advised him to take up his quarters in Carson, where he would be most likely to meet one of the men, if not both, on one of their frequent trips to that town.

"If you could strike young Washoe he could tell you where they hang out all right," added the proprietor. "He was the fellow who stole them away from the crowd when every one was believing that foolishness about the two old scamps finding a second Comstock lode. He must have learned the truth mighty quick as it wa'n't no time before he showed up in Virginia alone."

"I'd like to meet Washoe," murmured George, his eyes taking on the dull, dead opacity that advertised his homicidal rage. "Yes; I'd like to meet Washoe."

That evening he rode into Carson and put up at the St. Nicholas and retired without making any queries. That he was known even before he reached the hotel had been evidenced by the faces peering at him from windows. This nervous consciousness of his presence pleased him tremendously, and he chuckled grimly as he spread newspapers on the floor of his room and tossed two heavy guns onto the bed. In the morning he began his search in the barroom, and was much irritated to be told the two men had their home somewhere between Silver City and Gold Hill.

"But I've been over that stretch of the road carefully. No one I talked to seemed to know about them."

"They're of no more account than a clump of sage-brush, or a bunch of greasewood," explained his informant. "Times are too exciting for a man to take any notice of them. They ain't in business, they don't hunt for mineral locations; they just live like the turnips along the Walker River."

He thanked the man with studious politeness and went out on the street. He halted at the corner of Carson and First Streets and debated whether to wait in town for Kane to show up, or to make a still hunt for him. He was still meditating over the problem when his attention was attracted to a young fellow spurring his horse recklessly down Carson Street and screeching like an Indian. The rider was intoxicated and bent on dangerous sport. He was dressed in an elaborate Mexican costume and was swinging a coiled lariat about his head as he drove pedestrians to cover.

"That ought to be stopped!" remarked a disgruntled citizen to George.

George gave him a sidelong glance and murmured—

"I should assume it might be stopped."

The man, ignorant of George's identity and pleased by the well modulated voice, inquired—

"Are you the new gospel sharp, stranger?"

"Only a simple sinner," replied George, his half-closed eyes watching the reckless horseman all but stampede a train of mules as he pivoted his mount for a return race up the street.

"That's Mulligan. Made a small strike. Sold out, and is blowing in his cash on whisky and women. Acts like a madman when half-drunk. Nearly ran down the Jaimson girl who's working at Miss Clapp's seminary. Lord!—but you should have heard her dress him! If she'd been heeled she'd 'a' shot his head off."

"Too bad," murmured George.

Mulligan was now well under way and from his attitude and his eagerness in scanning the drifting throngs it was plain he was about to select a victim for his rope. He found nothing to suit his fancy until he spied George's tall form and the shiny "stove-pipe" hat. With a yell of delight he charged down upon him and swung the rope for a cast. No one saw George pull his guns, not even the man at his side; but there they were, one in each hand, just as the coils began to unwind, and the moment they appeared they began to shoot. Down went the horse shot through the head by the first bullet, and down went Mulligan with his peaked sombrero perforated and his right wrist smashed. The guns disappeared

Digitized by Google

as quickly as they had appeared. And George, pausing to light a cigar as the crowd rushed to the wounded man and dragged him from the dead horse, softly remarked—

"I had a good notion to kill him, but perhaps this has taught him a lesson."

"Who might you be?" faltered the citizen.

"My friends call me 'George.' "

Enlightenment began to show in the man's eyes. To make sure he added—

"And what do your enemies call you?"

"Much the same, but usually 'Gentle George.' "

The citizen disappeared in the gathering crowd.

Well pleased with the incident, George strolled the street for a short distance and then returned to the hotel office. The babbling of the crowd told him he and his exploit were being discussed. As he halted just inside the door one man was loudly proclaiming:

"Mulligan was drunk! He didn't mean no harm. Just playful. To bust —— out of his best wrist like that——"

"Shut up, you fool! Shut up!" hissed a warning voice.

"—called for some —— clever shooting," completed the man in a shaky voice and with a wild glance at the tall figure by the door.

Affecting not to hear this and other remarks George made his way to the bar and called for a glass of water. He could feel the fear and homage radiating from the crowd. As he glanced in the mirror he could observe how all eyes were focused on him; yet when he slowly turned his head every face was averted. He finished his glass and would have retired had not the bartender leaned forward and whispered—

"Beg pardon, Mister George, but my partner was saying how you was asking about old Sorry Kane this morning just before I come on duty."

"I am anxious to locate Roscoe Kane. I believe he is known as 'Sorry' down here," affably responded George.

"Well, you see, I think a feller called Washoe could help you out if you can git in touch with him."

"Washoe? I know him. You believe he knows where Kane can be found?"

"He oughter know. When Kane and Feeble Thomas come back over the ridge and had the whole valley trailing 'em he stole the two of 'em right out from under our noses one night. Took 'em away as slick as a whistle. They just wasn't here; that's all. All three gone before nary a soul knew it. Got 'em away after dark."

"You are the first intelligent man I've talked with since coming on from Salt Lake. Talk some more." And a gold coin rang on the bar.

"Oh, you mustn't pay me," protested the bartender, pushing the coin back. "Not from you, Mister George. Glad to do anything I can to help you. Washoe come to town with the young gal that's now working at Miss Clapp's seminary. Mighty fetching-looking gal, too. Matilda Jaimson's her name. I was serving Washoe just where you're standing now when Kell Hawkins joined him and joked him about the gal. Wahoe shut him up in a nice, quiet sort of a way. Washoe met the gal at Strawberry Flat when Kane and Thomas was there and spilled some silver ore and got the crowd after 'em. He 'n' the gal come on a coach ahead of the two men. One of Dows' clerks told me Washoe took the gal to the store and bought her clothes and stuff. Clerk said she looked like a scarecrow till she got her new duds. Then he drove her to the seminary where she got some work."

"The indomitable Washoe permitting his lady fair to work!" murmured George.

"Huh?"

"Nothing. Then Kane and his friend came along and Washoe stole the two away from the Carson City men?"

"Just that. Stole 'em away while the whole town was packing up grub and buying picks and shovels and waiting to trail Sorry and Feeble. But most every one says Washoe's too square to hog any ledge. He promised the crowd in here that if there was any ledge every one should have a whack at it after the discovery-claims was filed. No one believes now they found any ledge, or else Washoe would be back, or sending word."

"I thank you. If I can convenience you at any time please let me know." And leaving the bartender to wonder if this was an offer to murder any of his enemies George returned to the street.

WHEN a short distance from the hotel he inquired for the seminary and was soon at the open door and explaining to Miss Clapp that he would like a few words with Miss Matilda Jaimson.

Digitized by Google

"I am a friend of one called Washoe," he added. "I learned at the hotel that my friend brought the young lady here, and as I am anxious to find him I thought she might know where he is."

"I do not think so," discouraged Miss Clapp. "Still you may talk with her. From what she told me he was only a coach-acquaintance and was very good to her on the trip over the mountains. I couldn't encourage a continuation of that acquaintance, and from what your friend said I'm satisfied it's only an incident to him, forgotten by this time, most likely. She knows nothing about his antecedents, or where he is to be found. He has not endeavored to see her. She is a very bright girl and has quite a remarkable singing voice. I hope to help her. I believe I can—if her interest is not disturbed."

"Oh, I can vouch for Washoe. He's a very likeable young man. His deportment would be perfectly satisfactory under all circumstances. He won't disturb the young lady's new interests in the least. But so long as I am here, if I may——"

He could. Miss Clapp was pleased with his bearing and vocabulary, and she ushered him into a little sitting-room and excused herself while she went to find Matilda. The girl soon burst into the room like a small whirlwind and stared eagerly at George's pale, expressionless face for a moment; then cried—

"You're Mister Washoe's friend?"

"I would rather meet him now than almost any man I can think of," he murmured, rising and motioning for her to be seated. "If I find him he can help me locate two of his friends, known as Sorry Kane and Feeble Thomas."

"I can help you some," she eagerly informed him. "I don't know about the two you name, but Mister Washoe is in Virginia City." Then proudly, "I got a letter from him. Look!"

And she drew from her bosom the letter Washoe had written just before his departure for the Flowery Diggings. She shyly extended it, saying:

"I didn't mention getting it. But there ain't anything in it that any one can't read."

"I should hope not," gravely replied George, taking the letter. It read:

To my dear little friend, Matilda Jaimson—Since leaving Carson I have learned that your pap has struck it rich, or thinks he has, somewhere in the Reese River valley, and is uncertain about the time he can make Virginia City. He gave Feeble Thomas some rich lumps of ore and asked him to get word to you for you to stay in Sacramento until he sent for you. Unfortunately Thomas mailed the letter about the time you started to cross the ridge. If you wish to return to Sacramento and stay until your pap comes to Virginia City I will be pleased to arrange the expense part of it through Miss Clapp, or Mr. Daws. You will feel perfectly free to accept this offer as your pap seems to have stumbled onto a bonanza and can quickly repay me. If you wish to remain with Miss Clapp I should think it will be all right. If your pap knew how nicely you're situated I am sure he wouldn't worry any. With best wishes from your friend—Washoe.

As he folded and handed back the letter she pressed it to her breast and sighed:

"The very first letter I ever had! But I'm not going back to Uncle Allen's. They treat me lovely here and I'm reading a heap. Never knew there was so many things to read. And I'm taking singing-lessons. Miss Clapp says I sing real good."

"You should show the letter to Miss Clapp," decided George. "Then when you get word, as you may any day, that your father is at Virginia it won't come as a surprize to her."

"I s'pose that's best," she sighed. "I was just playing it was a secret. I'll show it to her today."

"He says nothing about where Kane and Thomas live," mused George.

"But you know where he is, and that's better," she reminded.

"Yes, that's best," he murmured. "And the quicker it's known that they got the ore from your father the sooner it will stop lots of talk in the valley. But I'm not concerned about that. Simply wish to get track of my friend, and through him I'll find Kane and Thomas." He rose and admonished her once more to show the letter to her benefactor, and gravely bid her good-day.

Once outside the house his thin face drew down and his pale eyes were unpleasant to see.

"—— him!" he grated. "—— his gizzard! The young whelp lied to me. Now what for? Does he know why I'm here? If he does he's sent a warning to Kane. But how could he know? Even Kane can't suspect I'm mixed up in it. Kane has never told that part of his life. He must believe the secret is safe after these seventeen years. Certainly Washoe can't know about it. Then why did he lie to me and pretend he

Digitized by Google

knew nothing about Kane? Not because of the ore, for his letter shows they told him where it came from. Well, friend Washoe, with your innocent smirk, you'll talk straight the next time we meet."

He walked about the town until his anger was well within control. As his rage subsided he began to speculate on what advantages he could draw from the girl's disclosures. For if he failed in his quest he would receive no reward; nor would he care to return to Salt Lake City. According to Washoe's letter the girl's father had struck it rich in the Reese River valley. He must have struck it very rich if the specimens of ore he gave to Thomas could cause so much excitement. The more he thought of it the more he hungered to share in Pap Jaimson's good luck.

The rôle of killer was being played out; he had no delusions about that. Ice-cold nerve, abstemiousness, avoidance of women, and a fair amount of luck had seen him through thus far. But he was a marked man. He winced whenever he recalled the wild ride over the mountains to escape from the California vigilants. Some such reform movement might be ushered into the silver country any time. He summed up his meditations and decided to strive for two goals—he would earn the generous reward offered by his employers in Salt Lake, and he would secure a share of Jaimson's bonanza. Addressing his keen wits to the second problem he knew, by the time he reached the hotel, what his preliminary move would be.

"Hello, George. Kell Hawkins," broke in a voice.

He glanced up and coldly ordered—

"Take your hand from your pocket, Mr. Hawkins, if you want to talk to me—or to anybody else."

Hawkins hesitated a second, then slowly drew his hand from the side pocket of his sack-coat.

"I do want to talk with you. Where can we be alone?"

"First, tell me why you come with your hand on a gun?"

"It was something that Washoe said in Virginia. From his talk and manner he meant for me to think you were gunning for me. He didn't say it in so many words."

"And believing that you came to hunt me up?" asked George incredulously.

"I came because I didn't believe it. Still his talk made me uneasy."

"Come up to my room. We'll inquire into this matter. Either you or young Washoe is in for a poor time."

He motioned for Hawkins to precede him, and the ordeal of walking up the one flight of stairs with the tall killer behind him called for a display of all the gambler's poker nerve. Once they were in the room George tersely commanded—

"Talk."

Hawkins could be subtle; he could be evasive. Now he was quite honest and rapidly related much that had passed between him and Washoe in Carson and Virginia. He did not mention the incident of the cold-deck and passed the card-game off as a quarrel over a fat jack-pot. George was not interested until the recital reached the night in Virginia, when Washoe had intruded on the company in the back room of the Magnolia. Then his pale eyes lighted up and he cried:

"The young devil has sand in his craw! Lots of it! Bluffed you all cold."

"But we reckoned you were behind him," grumbled Hawkins.

The compliment was appreciated, yet George could not lessen his respect for Washoe.

"You may have thought that, but he didn't," said the killer. "He knew he was playing a lone hand. I could almost forgive him for lying to me. But I won't. When I get back to Virginia City I'll do him the honor of looking him up."

"You'll need a spy-glass," said Hawkins with a low laugh. "He's dropped off the map. French Fannie is after him for killing Planter."

"But he never killed Planter. You've already shown that. That job was just about Bill Mayfield's size. I drove him and his three friends from the bar. If he had batted an eye I'd have made him eat his guns."

"Of course Washoe didn't kill Planter. That's the joke on him. French Fannie thinks he did."

George looked his disgust, and murmured:

"I'm afraid I never could warm up to you as a brother, Hawkins. There was you, and there was Mayfield, let alone your friends, and yet you let one man bluff you out of your boots."

"We thought you was outside, ready to chip in," was the gambler's defense.

Digitized by Google

"That makes no difference. If I had to choose between you and your friends and Washoe alone, I'd take Washoe."

Hawkins managed to keep his face impassive although he was wishing himself miles away from Carson City. Then George soothed his ruffled feelings by continuing:

"Still you and I can act together. Washoe and I can never work in harness. He has deliberately deceived me. If he had done it to save his hide he would have some excuse. But he did it without any reason I can discover. And I'm poor at forgetting."

"We'll back you to the limit, George," eagerly assured Hawkins. "That means my friends, too."

"I may want to use you, Hawkins, but I don't know about your friends. I have something in mind that ought to pay us extremely well. Where can I find Washoe now?"

"He's hiding somewhere. Some say he's gone over the ridge to Sacramento, or Frisco. He rode out to Flowery Diggings. French Fannie learned that much and rode out after him. She couldn't find him. Something scared him away."

George mused for a few minutes; then said:

"You return to Virginia tonight and send this message to Miss Matilda Jaimson, care of Miss Clapp's seminary." And he took a piece of paper from his pocket and scrawled a line.

"Then you tell the proprietor of the Magnolia to be ready to hire a singing-girl at good pay. No matter whether she can sing or not he's to hire her and see she isn't bothered. Tell him I said so. I'll be back in Virginia almost as soon as you are if I have any luck, or find there's no use in my staying here."

"I'll be going it blind—and glad to if you don't care to talk. Yet I'd like to know what it means," ventured Hawkins.

George hesitated a few moments, then coldly said:

"You'd never dare try any tricks on me. The girl's father has struck a bonanza, and I intend to get a share of it. There will be enough for the two of us and any one else we take in. Our first step is to get the girl to Virginia. I haven't worked out the second step yet. She may disappear."

"That's a mighty big piece of luck! It ought to be easy to work!" softly cried Hawkins.

"I had a side-issue in mind when I spoke of luck. Something that doesn't concern you," coldly replied George. "This game can be worked all right if you don't let yourself be bluffed."

"No one will bluff me again," assured Hawkins.

"I'm taking that for granted. You'd better go right away and start the message back so it'll arrive here early in the evening."

Hawkins obediently arose, saying:

"Hope I run into Washoe before you come. I'll drill him on sight."

"No." And George shook his head firmly. "Leave him to French Fannie. I don't even yet know I want her to get him. At least not until he has led me to a man I'm sharp to find."

"It's all blind to me, but I reckon you know your business," said Hawkins.

"That's the best bet you can make," crisply assured George.

And thus it came about that late that evening Miss Matilda Jaimson was thrown into a fine flutter of excitement and rejoicing by receiving from a mounted messenger a scrawl which directed:

Come to Virginy and meet me at the Magnolia—
PAP.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEW SINGING GIRL

WASHOE rode out to examine some new claims twenty miles north of the Gopher Hole. He told none where he was going; nor was any curious, with the possible exception of Billings, and his devotion to Mack's Bitters caused him to forget to ask questions. After several days of investigation Washoe traded for feet in two likely looking claims and returned to Billings' shack.

He found the assayer experiencing a temporary relief from dyspeptic pains and jovially drunk on his favorite panacea and eager for companionship. As he set out the greasy beans and horrible hot bread he said with a chuckle—

"Never knew before you was such a sly dog, Washoe."

He leered knowingly; Washoe stared in amazement.

"By mighty! But she's a stunning looking woman. Most men would be running toward her 'stead of away from her. And

Digitized by Google

mad! Why, if she'd been a Digger, hunting immigrant hair, she couldn't look any madder. Still she must be a hummer when she feels pleasant. Offered her a drink of bitters, and she let on she might cut my throat."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm trying to tell you. The woman that talks like a foreigner. 'Ees ze mans Washoe in ze here?' You can't bluff me. You know who I mean. Sort of hisses her words. Eyes blazing like stars shining through holes in a black blanket. —— me! If that don't assay out real poetry I'll never find silver indications in a grindstone again! 'Like stars shining through holes in a black blanket!' Now, why'n —— did those words pop into my mind?"

"Mack's Bitters," grimly suggested Washoe, yet casting an uneasy glance at the door. "When was she here? What's her name? What did you tell her?"

With drunken solemnity Billings coldly replied:

"She was here the day after you left. Didn't honor me with her name. I reckoned she was raised in *la belle France*. Just because I asked her to have a mild snort of bitters she gave me a look that cut me from bosom to backbone. None of the fire-eating kind for me, thank you! Told her you'd gone back to Virginia City and was on your way over the ridge."

"Thank you, Billings. You're a good fellow!" softly cried Washoe.

"A kindly creature when the devil's out of my in'ards," gravely agreed the assayer. "But it wasn't all a lie. I naturally thought you'd be keen to make Frisco and clean up on what you had left of the Gopher Hole. And if I had a sneaking notion you might not be bound for the ridge I was generous enough to give you a fighting chance—a running chance; for when a young woman with a snake's tongue is so 'tached to a man she comes after him with a Colt navy strapped around her waist I know it's time the man orders mourning, or else puts the Mississippi between him and her. Yes, sir! But, Washoe, old pard, if you've wronged that young woman——"

"Never spoke to her. She's crazy," growled Washoe, glumly staring at his plate of beans and wondering if it ever would be safe for him to return to Virginia. She would certainly shoot him on sight.

"No mail brought out for me, I suppose?"

Billings scratched his head reflectively.

"Can't you answer? Don't you know?" impatiently demanded Washoe.

"I answer 'yes.' There was a letter, and I'm trying to think what I did with it. Came two days after the fiery woman was here."

He turned to the table and began pawing over some Virginia City auction bills. He halted his search to admire a crude debauch of colors supposed to picture the alluring charms of the Hurdy Gurdy Girls, Singers, Dancers and Musicians, soon to visit Virginia. He shifted his attention to a dislodged wall picture of the "Explosion of the Mississippi River Steamboat *Brilliant* at Bayou Goula in 1851," and elicited a smothered oath from Washoe. He used up a minute in tying the broken string and hanging the picture in its proper place; and Washoe wrathfully denounced:

"You were beastly drunk when the letter came. You have no idea where it is."

"Beasts do not drink," good-naturedly corrected Billings. "Don't you get excited. It was a man's handwriting. Probably don't 'mount to much. But it's here somewhere." And once more he attacked the loose litter on the table.

At last, with a little cry of triumph, he picked up a soiled missive and explained:

"I use the back of it to figure on. No wonder I couldn't lay my hand on it. But here it is, all hunky." And with a flourish he passed over the sealed paper.

Washoe tore it open and found it was from John Blackburn. It stated:

F. F. thinks you went over the ridge and is following you by coach. Think she'll go way through to Sacramento, or to Frisco. Frisco banker came here the day before F. F. got back from Flowery Diggings. He said you sold him feet in the Gopher Hole that is a bonanza. Town laughed at him, allowing you showed him samples sneaked from the Mexican, or California. O. K. for you to come back. George came to town with a young friend. Hawkins out of town. Hear nothing more about P.'s death now F. F. has lit out. Yrs. truly, J. Blackburn.

With a pleasant revulsion of feelings Washoe hastily gathered up his few belongings and informed Billings. "I'm riding back to town. Much obliged to you for keeping the letter. I'll send out a case of bitters by the first ore wagon."

Without waiting for the assayer to finish his plea for company and a sociable night Washoe darted from the shack, mounted his horse, and started for Virginia.

Digitized by Google

HIS entrance to the town was marked by caution until he had led the horse through the rear door of the C Street stable. He did not believe he had been recognized by any one on the streets as it was quite dark when he ascended the slope. His favorite hostler, always sure of a substantial coin, hastened to take care of the horse. Washoe put eager questions to him, but beyond the usual odds and ends of violence there was nothing new. The town was growing used to Gentle George, who seldom was abroad except at night. The Montgomery Street banker's story of his Flowery Diggings investment had afforded the citizens a hearty laugh and had increased the public's estimate of Washoe's shrewdness in fleecing strangers.

Washoe looked to his guns and went to a restaurant and had his supper. Acquaintances showered him with congratulations for getting the best of the Frisco sharp, and with a little smile, and an inward grimace, Washoe accepted all tributes. Did he offer his remaining fifty feet in the claim anywhere short of San Francisco he would be laughed at for trying to repeat an ancient jest. He walked up the street and from a position among the deep shadows opposite the Magnolia began reconnoitering the saloon. Some unusual tragedy had just taken place, he decided as he observed the jam of humanity before the open door. He would have passed on had not the street gathering began clapping its hands and stamping its heavy boots. Even in bizarre Virginia City it was not customary to applaud a murderer.

He was still hesitating when a voice of unusual sweetness began singing:

"The years creep slowly by, Lorena;
The snow is on the grass again;
The sun's low down the sky, Lorena;
The frost gleams where the flowers have been.
But the heart throbs on as warmly now
As when the Summer days were nigh;
Oh, the sun can never dip so low
Adown affection's cloudless sky."

It was the sentimental song of the whole South and was being sung in every Southern home and wherever men wore the trappings of war. Washoe was hearing it for the first time and was strangely stirred by a sentiment his busy life had lacked, as well as by the appealing voice of the singer. Indoors and out the men remained silent while the second stanza was being given. Then arose a mighty shout, a thunderous outburst of applause. Washoe emerged from his spell and crossed the street. Of the first man he reached on the edge of the crowd he asked:

"Who is it? It can't be one of those Hurdy-Gurdy Girls."

"Where'n —— you been to git that fool notion? She's a lady. Darned if I know who she is, but she's got a voice that would melt a grindstun. Has all the people in town a-hanging on her singing. Magnolia's paying her more money then Jedge Mott gits. After every song the crowd pelts money at her. She's got the best paying lode in these diggings."

"Doesn't she sing again?" asked Washoe, something in him hungry to hear more.

"There's a wait between songs so's the bar can handle trade. She'll sing again."

Washoe worked his way to the entrance and squirmed through the mass of men. The gambling hall was thrown open and all games were suspended. This long room, as well as the bar, was crowded. An avalanche of trade was keeping the bartenders on the jump, with several extras helping the regular staff. As a business proposition, Washoe shrewdly decided, the girl was a good investment for the Magnolia. The portly proprietor, seated on a high stool at the end of the bar, smiled his satisfaction as he watched the money and silver slugs cross the long counter. Of the singer there was nothing to be seen, and Washoe was disappointed. He thought she might be waiting in the gambling hall and worked his way toward the entrance, but halted on finding John Blackburn blocking the way.

"Got your letter, John. And thanks. Shall we walk somewhere and talk?"

"Better stay and hear the new singer."

"I think not. I was tempted enough to crowd my way in here, but find it pretty close. She has a wonderfully sweet voice—sort of gets to a man. Or perhaps it's because I haven't heard much singing—woman's singing. But it might not sound so sweet after I'd seen her."

"She's worth looking at," assured Blackburn with a little smile. "Not the ordinary kind at all. She'd remind you of some one."

"I hardly think so. I'm not much taken with women; so I don't remember them," said Washoe. "That French woman isn't in town, eh?"

"Still away. Far over the ridge by this time."

Digitized by Google

"Let's get out of here, where we can have a talk," Washoe impatiently insisted. "Let's go up to the International. Crowd's all down here. It'll be quiet and lonesome up there."

"I'll wait for one more song, Washoe. And you'd better linger. Just as soon as the bar decides every one has had enough rum to last them for ten minutes the young woman will appear again. None of the games start until ten o'clock when the singing ends for the night. The young lady refuses to be out later than that."

"The place would make more money by holding the games off and keeping her at it," decided Washoe as he watched the bartenders madly pushing bottles along the bar and raking in the money.

"Young woman's queer. Simply won't stay later than ten. Says every one ought to be asleep by that time."

"Erhuh. Where's Bill Mayfield?"

"He and his gang left t'other day. Next night the express office in Carson was broken into and robbed. It's being said on the side that Bill turned the trick. Quite a lot of vigilance talk being whispered on the street, but so long as he doesn't do anything here except blow his money it'll all end in talk."

"George still here, your letter said."

"Shows up every night at about ten to take the singer and about a peck of money home. Crowd just showers her with cash. Hawkins is still away. Now, hush. There she comes. She's about to sing again."

Instantly the bartenders folded their arms and thankfully leaned back and the trade stopped. The two big rooms became quiet, and the crowd in the street ceased its clamor; and again the youthful, vibrant voice cast its spell, this time singing, "My Old Kentucky Home." At first Washoe could not see the singer and annoyed those about him by shifting his position.

"End of the bar. Front of the boss's private office. Every nigger within hearing is howling his eyes out with homesickness by this time."

Washoe ignored the scowls of a miner in front of him and changed his position. In amazement he stared at the small, earnest face of Miss Matilda. She was wearing her short Spanish jacket and looked even younger than her years. She wore no hat, and her mop of golden curls was caught severely back with a ribbon. Her large gray eyes slowly traversed the rows of bearded faces as she sang. She was thoroughly self-possessed; and she sang with the heart of a bird, sang because she loved it. Washoe did not wonder that her audience should be deeply affected.

Her wandering gaze did not discover the young man. When she finished, the gravity left her face. She smiled mischievously and made a prim little courtesy and backed through the doorway of the private office. The room rocked with approval. A forest of arms sprang up to fling coins, slugs and wads of greenbacks into the open space just before the closed door. The generous offerings were quickly gathered into a small basket and desposited back of the proprietor's high stool.

Washoe elbowed and pushed his way to the end of the bar and informed the proprietor:

"I'm a friend of Miss Jaimson's. I wish to speak with her."

"No, sir!" firmly replied the proprietor, fairly glaring down on the applicant. "There's too many 'friends' wanting to speak to the little lady. She doesn't care for that. I have her orders."

Washoe reddened as some of the men behind him laughed loudly, while others muttered threats because of his presumption.

"At least, take my name in to her," said Washoe, his face hardening.

"Now, Washoe, it won't do. She made the rule, and no man can break it," stoutly insisted the proprietor. "It was a condition she made when she hired out to sing to the boys. And I'll be much obliged if you'll get back with the rest where you belong."

"And you'll git something hefty busted over your head if you don't git back —— quick!" bawled a begrimed driver of an ore team.

The situation was saved from violence by the office door opening. Miss Matilda's face appeared long enough for her to call out shrilly—

"Mister Washoe, you can come in for five minutes."

Washoe sprang forward and through the door and closed the door after him and cried:

"I'm plumb flustered to see you here, Miss Matilda. I thought you was set on schooling."

Digitized by Google

SOMEHOW she had changed, and he wondered if instinct were correct in warning him that she almost resented his intrusion. She quietly explained:

"Pap sent me a line of writing, saying I was to meet him here. When I got here I found another word, saying he couldn't reach town as quick as he had planned."

"Probably found another river to drive around," whimsically suggested Washoe.

But there was no answering merriment in her gray eyes now. She disconcerted him by coolly agreeing.

"That might be likely. I would have gone back to Miss Clapp but I had this chance to sing to the men. And I'm making heaps of money. Now you know all about *me*."

Washoe had no reason to doubt the authenticity of Jaimson's message to the girl.

"But how did you happen to get this offer?" he asked, much puzzled and vaguely worried. "How did the Magnolia know you could sing?"

"Oh, Mister George, your friend, spoke to the boss, and he let me try. They seem to like my singing. Carry home a basket full of money every night. Besides what the men give I get more from the boss every week then I s'posed any one could honestly earn."

"George? Gentle George?" muttered Washoe. "He's no friend of mine."

"Then shame on you to say it," she quickly cried. "He always spoke well of you. Spoke well even when he had a chance not to."

"It's all blind to me," declared Washoe. "Did he say he was my friend? And how did you happen to meet *him*?"

"He looked me up at Carson City," she coldly answered. "Being your friend he wanted to find out where you were located. Some one had told him you came over the mountains on the same coach with me. When I come here he naturally looked me up again. When he found pap wasn't here, wouldn't be here for some time, he spoke to the boss outside— And see here, Mister Washoe, I 'low it ain't for you to ask any more questions about Matilda Jaimson."

"God knows I don't want to meddle with your affairs," he sighed. "I just wanted to know you were getting a square deal."

Her eyes softened for a moment, then grew hard.

"I'm still toting old Turkey-buster," she said, and she pointed to a corner where stood the squirrel-rifle.

More composed he assured her:

"I didn't mean to pry into your affairs. I only wish you well."

"I feel I oughter talk free to you for the bother you took in coming over the mountains with me, and getting me into Miss Clapp's school," she sorrowfully told him. "But the Jaimsons are respect'ble folks even if we are slow on book-l'arning. And—I hate to say it, Mister Washoe, after you've been so good to me—we can't afford to have any truck with a man who's carried on as you have."

His astonishment held him silent for half a minute, and then, before he could demand an explanation she was accusing—

"And when that painted woman came in here looking for you, and half-wild to find you, it just fair sickened me— That's all."

"That woman!" he gasped. "Why, she's hunting me to kill me!"

She eyed him scornfully, and sadly retorted:

"I'll try to hope you don't need killing, Mister Washoe. And I 'low your five minutes is about up. I let you come in because of your being good to me coming over the mountains."

"You'd condemn me like this?" he protested, inwardly raging that he should feel any concern. He had felt great relief after depositing her under Miss Clapp's care.

Again the gray eyes softened, and she softly said:

"It ain't for a Jaimson woman to be unjust. If you think you can explain it you can go ahead and try."

He discovered he could explain nothing. Whatever he might tell her would sound preposterous. He had no proofs. The whole situation was as complicated as it was sordid. In despair he said:

"You're thinking mean things about me, Miss Matilda. And I must let it go at that. You wouldn't understand if I talked it all out. And failing to understand you wouldn't believe. At least I'm sincere in wishing you the best of luck. You like it here, or you wouldn't be here."

"I'm doing the best I can till pap comes," she muttered, hurt because he had made no defense. "The men don't bother me any." Then after a slight pause she bitterly added, "But the woman who come looking for you

Digitized by Google

ain't of the breed I'm used to. But I'm not saying anything against her, or her kind. I s'pose she is as good as the men who are to blame for her painted face."

"You'll let me ask where you make your home?"

"With honest people. Man and wife and three children."

"You'll let me walk home with you tonight and carry your basket?"

She shook her mass of curls firmly.

"I'd be afraid that mad woman would be jumping you. Mister Washoe, you've had your chance to talk, and wouldn't. Time's up."

"But you can't go through the streets, carrying all that money," he persisted, thoroughly angry because he had to ignore her second reference to French Fannie, whose relation to him she had so widely misunderstood.

"Mister George sees me to my door."

"Gentle George escorting young women!" And he laughed grimly.

"See here, Mister Washoe; that's more'n enough. Mister George may have all the men scared of him, but no painted women are chasing him 'round like he had cheated them. Time's more'n up."

And she opened the door, and Washoe was forced to leave her while her small head was filled with erroneous ideas.

He forced his way through the crowd to where Blackburn was waiting, and hissed:

"—— him! I'll kill him! What's his game with her? How did he come to know her at all? Why did he make her believe he was my friend and was looking for me?"

"You simmer down," warned Blackburn. "You're acting as if you was crazy jealous. Every one will catch on and be laughing at you; then there'll be a gun-fight. George walks home with her as far as her door. He's no ladies' man. Of course he has some game afoot. If you can keep your head and don't go to stopping bullets with it we may find out the truth."

"But she thinks that French woman was my sweetheart!" growled Washoe, still seeing red.

"And the way she looked at you when she opened the door, mad enough to take your scalp, I'd say she doesn't like the notion."

"George gave that idea while pretending to be my friend. —— him! He lied to her and made her believe that rot."

"He didn't have to lie to her. First day the girl was here Fannie came in on the rampage, demanding to be led to you. In her crazy way she was telling the whole place how you'd wronged her. Of course the town knows what she means. But the little girl isn't used to such matters. She hasn't even heard the gossip about Planter's death. It isn't talked about except by those who are inside the secret. She talks with no one except the family she's boarding with. Man works on the night shift at the Ophir. Woman stays at home and minds the children. You smooth down. Miss Matilda won't come to any harm, and by and by we'll find out what's behind it all."

"Oh, it doesn't make that much difference to me," haughtily informed Washoe.

"Then you're all fool. Now let's pull a leg."

"I'm waiting here to meet George and tell him what's what," was the grim reply.

"More fool talk, especially for a man who doesn't care. You and George meet here tonight and one of you dies on the floor. If you happened to kill him the girl would never forgive you. You would be driving her away from the town. If he kills you, which is more likely, you've spoiled the girl's chance to make an honest living while waiting for her father to show up. So you're going to take a walk with me, *now*."

DESPITE his hot rage Washoe had sense enough to realize what great trouble he would be making for the girl if he met and quarreled with the killer. Stifling his rage, he reluctantly allowed Blackburn to clutch his arm and force a passage to the street. Greatly disturbed by the whole affair he blindly accompanied Blackburn into several low resorts before he comprehended that his friend must have some errand in each.

"Hunting for George?" he eagerly whispered as they left the Cosy Home.

"Last man on earth I want you to meet until you get a better grip on yourself. George doesn't visit these places. I'm looking for some of the Mayfield gang. The stuff taken from the Carson City office is more valuable than the public knows about."

"Of course Bill took it," mumbled Washoe.

"Of course," gently agreed Blackburn. "If I can catch some of the gang drunk and blowing in some of the gold I'll have hopes of rounding up the rest of the loot. The

Digitized by Google

public doesn't know there was gold bullion taken. Not perfectly refined and yet running better than fifteen dollars to the ounce."

"But the Ophir gold, before they got down to silver, only ran from ten to fourteen to the ounce," reminded Washoe, his professional interest coming to life. "Where is the new ledge?"

"When working as deputy-marshal I can't tell ledge secrets. But I'll say this much; the gold never came from these diggings. It was put on a coach many miles east of here. The Wells-Fargo man is puzzled. He says it's just the same as if you smelted pieces of jewelry. It was shipped to Frisco, but the coach broke down at Carson, and the stuff was put in the express office to be picked up by the next westbound coach. Next morning it was gone. None of it yet has passed over any Virginia bars that I can learn."

"I'm poor company, and you have other places to visit. I'll leave you here, John; walk a bit and then turn in."

Blackburn glanced at him suspiciously. They were standing before The Miners' Home.

"No gunning for George?"

"No. I promise. It'll keep. Besides, I want to learn his game before I spoil it."

They parted, and Washoe walked aimlessly through several streets and did not take much heed of where he went until he heard the girl's sweet voice singing:

"A hundred months have passed, Lorena,
Since last I held that hand in mine,
And felt the pulse beat fast, Lorena,
Though mine beat faster far than thine.
A hundred months—'twas flowery May,
When up the hilly slope we climbed,
To watch the dying of the day
And hear the distant church bells chime."

As the last note died away Washoe stared about him and found himself in close proximity to the Magnolia. Turning about he hurried away and did not lessen his pace until he reached the International. The hotel was strangely deserted, for the new singing-girl was drawing huge crowds to the Magnolia. Washoe seated himself at a small table in a corner of the office and picked up a newspaper. As he idly glanced over the hectic mining news he became conscious of some one watching him. Turning over the paper he flashed a look about, but there was no one near his corner; nor was any one in the room subjecting him to a steady scrutiny. He pretended to read for another minute and again turned the paper, and this time, from the corner of his eye, he detected motion at the window close to his right hand. Lifting the paper as he lifted his head he was in time to see the back of Gentle George. There was no mistaking the tall hat and light hair. George was making up the street and would either enter or pass by the street entrance. Washoe had time enough to secure control of his nerves before the tall, slim figure of the killer entered the office and advanced toward the corner.

Not until George came to a halt and lowered ominously down on him did Washoe, his two hands holding the paper, glance up in surprize. George began—

"I've been looking for you."

"All right. You've found me. Take a chair and be seated," replied Washoe.

"What I have to say won't take long. You forced your company on the girl at the Magnolia."

"You are a liar."

George's right hand flashed under the skirt of his long coat, but before he could draw a weapon Washoe's left hand flirted the paper one side and revealed his new Colt, cocked and aiming at the third waistcoat button.

George's pale eyes flickered with surprize.

"You knew I was coming in here," he murmured, slowly withdrawing his empty hand.

"I've been waiting for you," said Washoe, dropping the paper over his right hand and gun.

"You insisted on seeing and talking with Miss Jaimson."

"She gave me five minutes. What of it? Are you her guardian?"

"It's generally understood she isn't to be annoyed. You've just returned to town and probably didn't know that."

"My acquaintance with the young lady from the start taught me that she isn't to be annoyed. She is mighty well able to discourage any one who tries to do that. Has she complained to you because I talked with her?"

"No. There were men in the Magnolia bar who told me you had annoyed her."

"They are liars."

"You're too free with that word," gritted George.

Digitized by Google

"I'm in the driver's seat. There's no disgrace in being murdered by a bully, or a professional killer. But a man would be mighty ashamed to have even you try any such game as you've tried on me tonight. I know you, George. If you make a move for a gun again I'll drill a hole through you as large as a gopher's tunnel."

"That move was an impulse. You can put up that gun and be perfectly safe."

"I'm perfectly safe now. Why shift my bet? Anything else you wished to talk about?"

"Yes." And George pulled forward a chair and seated himself astride of it, his arms folded on the back. "I asked you about Thomas. You didn't tell me you had been with them for some days. You gave me to believe you didn't even know where they live."

"Why should I? I'm not on your payroll. You said you wanted to buy the new ledge Kane and Thomas were supposed to have located. I didn't believe that was your reason for wishing to see them. But I did tell you they had no ledge. Others have told you the same. By this time you know they never go prospecting, even. Yet you keep up a hunt for them. If I had known just what your game was I might have given you some information. It all depends."

George stroked his silky mustache and softly replied:

"I'll soon know where they live. I don't tell my business. People usually talk when I ask them to."

"I didn't," reminded Washoe with a twisted smile.

The baleful glance of the killer darted malevolently at the newspaper.

"Well, we'll call it that. This seems to be your evening, and yet I could have shot you through the window."

"No. I knew you were standing there watching me. I had you covered with my left hand. I'm as good with one as the other," cheerfully lied Washoe.

George eyed him thoughtfully, and murmured:

"Of course it won't do for me to shoot you down as I might have done a few years back. The town wouldn't stand for it."

"Never in the world. Any cold-blooded murder, worked publicly will bring a hemp mob down on the murderer, and the public will easily learn that a noose can shut off Gentle George's wind just as easy as if it chokes a sluice thief."

George nodded and said:

"I believe that's true. So when we next meet you needn't go for a gun. If I decide to get you it'll be a waste of time for you to try for a gun."

"Now I already know you've decided to get me what's to stop me from blowing the top of your head off?"

"Your nerve isn't quite up to it. You're thinking what the public will say and do. Yet I'll say this: I don't hold it against you because of tonight. It was really clever of you to be loaded for me. I hadn't planned to draw on you when I entered. If I had that old newspaper trick would have done you no good. I came in to warn you. Now I'll be going."

"But the warning? I didn't catch it."

"Keep away from the girl."

"Yes; if she says so. So far as you're concerned you can to go ——"

George rose from the chair, straightened the collar of his long coat, and stalked to the door. Suspecting some trick Washoe leaned across the table and watched sharply through the side windows. But the killer did not turn in that direction and Washoe saw him no more that night. Waiting until a score or more of men were making for the street in a body he joined them and was one of the group until some distance from the hotel. Then he took advantage of a patch of thick shadow and crossed the street and made for his room.

The street was dark except where an occasional light showed through a window; and Washoe approached his lodgings warily. As he was about to turn in at the door a figure rose from the corner of the building. Instantly Washoe had the man covered.

"Is that you, Washoe? Blackburn at this end."

"Been having some war-talk with George and my nerves are jumpy," laughed Washoe. "Come inside. We won't make a light."

The deputy marshal followed him to his room and Washoe found him a chair. Seating himself near the window Washoe briefly told what had happened at the hotel. Blackburn in turn informed him:

"After quitting you I swung back to the Magnolia. Hawkins came in, covered with dust from riding. What do you think he had with him?"

"Go ahead."

Digitized by Google

"A book. 'Count of Monte Cristo.' In the book was Sorry Kane's name."

Washoe whistled softly. George had confidently declared that he would soon know where the two men lived; and Hawkins had been to the tunnel.

"You got word to them that George was looking for Kane?" he asked.

"The first thing. Now Hawkins has found them. Brought back the book as proof he had located them."

"I'll bet he found the tunnel empty."

"Perhaps so. But I'll give all the hard money in my clothes to know why George comes out here from Salt Lake City and tries to find Sorry Kane."

Washoe shivered as he thought of the two helpless men.

"George is a killer by instinct and trade," he muttered. "He wouldn't go after Kane unless it was in the way of business. But who would want Sorry out of the way? He's as harmless as a rabbit."

"Kane's afraid of Mormons," mused Blackburn. "I've known him for years. Most of the time in this valley. He never would have stayed out here in the early days unless there were so many apostates. And he never cared to get acquainted even with them."

"And he's afraid of Bill Mayfield. Not for what Bill might do to him, but what he could tell about him if he recognized him. Bill must have known him some years back. He told me he was afraid Bill might remember him," mused Washoe.

"And yet there's something in this country, that ain't gold or silver, that's holding him in spite of his fear of Mormons and Mayfield," Blackburn went on.

"Who would ever think the old fellow could ever have been mixed up in anything!" exclaimed Washoe. "And Feeble Thomas must have caught fear from him, for he's scared of his shadow."

"Well, it'll all come out of the riffle," yawned Blackburn. "Thought I'd tell you about the story-book. I'll be too busy trying to nail the Carson City job onto Mayfield and his gang to keep much of an eye on Kane and Thomas. Thought you might want to get them word that their tunnel has been visited—if Hawkins didn't find them there."

Washoe willingly announced it to be his intention to warn the two men.

"And while I'm away I wish you'd keep an eye on Matilda Jaimson," he added.

"She hasn't any use for me since some one told her lies about the French woman. I've got some business to attend to; then I'll sneak away and look for Sorry and Feeble."

Blackburn was ready for bed, and Washoe accompanied him to the door. As Blackburn stepped into the street there came a flash, and the bang of a heavy-caliber gun across the road. Two seconds later Washoe was emptying a thirty-six at the spot where the assassin had stood. Then the two men ran across the road, but failed to find anybody.

"Some of the Mayfield gang trying to turn me off before I can prove the Carson City job on them," muttered Blackburn.

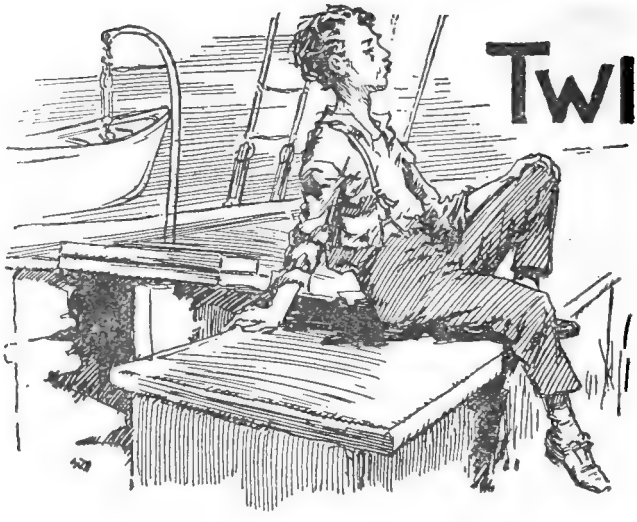
"I don't think so," disputed Washoe firmly. "Some one was watching my room to plug me the moment I showed a light. Whoever it was didn't get here until after we had entered. When you stepped from the door he took a chance it was me and blazed away."

"Any idea who it could be?"

"Several. It might have been Hawkins, or any of his men. It might have been Mayfield, or any of his gang. It might have been Gentle George, although shooting in the dark isn't his usual style. And, if she has returned from over the ridge it might have been French Fannie." Then with a grim laugh. "I've got quite a number to choose from. And when I came back from California there wasn't a man or woman on earth that I knew of who would wish me harm!"

TO BE CONTINUED

Digitized by Google



TWINKLE-BRIGHT *

By

Bill Adams

Author of "Time Comes," "Am s Tregenna," etc.

IT WAS wild weather by Tyne Dock. The Winter gales were piping across the gray North Sea; sleet and snow driving over the dark water. The houses by the water-front were close shut, aglow from little windows. The fishing-smacks lay at their wharves, safe from the sea's raging. The masts of ships rose as forests from the dark dock water.

A lad, seeking shelter from the Winter night, wandered, shivering, along the water-front. Coming to the dock-side, seeing the masts of the ships, he stopped; recalling Summer evenings when he had seen ships come in from sea; sailors singing at their capstans. Barefooted, freezing to the marrow, he stood staring through the Winter weather; hearing the sound of the sea outside as the cry of many voices calling. Before him lay a long, black-painted, lofty ship; arising in tier on tier of tapered spar; her shrouds, lost in the storm above, a web of whispering mystery. Knowing not whither, or why, as though charmed by the spell of a hidden witch-wife, he crossed her gangway; standing, alone and frightened on her deck—no warm lights to welcome him, no glowing windows, no smell of smoke from little chimneys—naught save the moan of the sea beyond the bar.

"Twinkle-Bright," copyright, 1922, by B. M. Adams.

A CLIPPER SHIP was driving to the open sea; meeting the sweep of Biscay, the shout of the west wind, the surge of the ocean; her canvas straining, her masts, loosing themselves in the wet fog above, heeling far over to the drumming of the wind in shroud and back-stay; her fog-horn wailing warning to her sisters hidden in thick weather.

" 'Oof!" said the bosun of the big ship. "She's sure a-goin' to blow."

"Bosun," said the mate, "go get those preventer sheets up from the sail locker. Get 'em aloft. We're goin' to need 'em, bos'."

Down to the sail locker went the bosun: a stubble-bearded man with heavy arms, and sinews as the sinews of an island-bred bull, whistling as he went—

"A Yankee ship came down the river."

"Two of you lubbers," said he, "get them preventer sheets out o' the sail locker, an' look alive."

"Aye, aye, sir," and down went a couple of sailors, Tom Swift and "Bloody" Quayle by name, rough fellows given to cursing whatever came their way; fine weather, foul weather, wind, calm, port or sea.

"Bloody," said Tom Swift, "if *I* was as ugly as wot *you* be, —— me if I wouldn't jump over the side an' say, ' 'Ere goes nobody,' —— me now if I wouldn't."

* *This is an Off-the-Trail Story.* *See first contents page.*

Digitized by Google

"Tom," said Bloody, "if *I* didn't 'ave no more sense than wot *you* 'ave, you boardin'-'ouse bum, you ring-tail cat from 'Tanarivo, I'd— Well, what the— S'welp me if here ain't a blighted stowaway!"

"A stowaway! Well, I'll be ——!" said the two of them together. "Ain't the little beggar 'ungry-lookin'? Sonny, 'ow did you leave your mommer?"

The lad stared up at them, white-faced and faint, his clothing wet, his lips a-tremble.

"Well! The pore little beggar," said Bloody.

"Well! The pore little beggar: that is wot I says too," said Tom.

"Bosun—bosun! You can blast my dead-lights if here ain't a blighted stowaway," said the two of them, speaking together; as old pals will.

Down to the sail locker went the stubble-faced bosun, his hooky fingers grasping the ladder rungs as though he too were related to the ring-tail cat from 'Tanarivo.

"Well! Ain't 'e the 'ungriest-lookin' little beggar? Well, I *will* be ——!" said the bosun.

"You, you two—wot in the blankety! W'y in the blankety! W'ere are those top'sl preventer sheets, eh? Get 'em aloft. Get 'em aloft quick, see?" he added.

"Mister," said he to the shiver-faced boy, "you'll come along an' be hinterdooced to the mate—'e'll be pleased to meet up with you, sir."

Aft behind the bosun went the shiver-faced boy, staggering to the lift of the clipper's feet, frightened to the soul of him.

"Mister, you kin blink me if 'ere ain't a little jewel for the cook to thicken the soup with, sir," said the bosun to the mate.

"Well," said the mate, "and is *that* so? Soup, my lad, eh? Did you say soup, bos'? Sonny, when did you last taste soup, eh?"

The shiver-faced boy stood all of a whimper at the very thought of warm soup in his cold little belly.

"Bosun," said the mate, "you'll take and introduce that little swab to Solomon—that's wot you'd better do, bosun. Take him along."

The bosun beckoned with a crooked finger, a finger short one joint—on account of a trifling accident upon a tops'l yard while running the easting down one time—and, "You come along o' me, little old Ten-toes," said he.

"Solomon! Solomon! If *I* was as like twin monkeys as wot *you* be, I'd niver in this world have the face to sign on for cook of no ship," said the bosun.

"You wouldn't, hey? Well, my son—it's buttons for beans you'll be gettin' in *your* soup. You'd best watch out, my son; see?" said Solomon, the cook of that swing-along, fly-away, fast-footed clipper.

"An' wot," he added, "is *that?* Where did you set your blasted rat-trap? Bosun, 'aven't you *any* 'eart?"

"Solomon," said the bosun, "you'll cut your fancy lingo an' you'll feed this 'ere deep-water sea-farin' party a dollop o' hot bean soup, see?"

"Soup? Did you say soup? Well, well now, bosun! That's a lingo wot I recalls to 'ave listened to afore. Sunshine, did your mommer ever feed you on soup?" said the sea-cook.

Inside the galley stood the cold-toed, shivering boy, his thin little nostrils all of a quiver—as when a spotted dog finds a bush with the birds in it.

"W-r-r-r-r-r-r—r-r-r-r-r-r-r," said he, all of a shiver.

"I used to 'ave a cage full o' w'istlin' canaries meself when I was in them coolie ships—but that's a new w'istle to me, my lad. Sit you down, sonny-boy," said old Solomon.

Putting a skinny arm all about the little lad's shoulder, he led him to the coal locker, opposite the big bright stove, black and shiny as a witch's boil-pot; covered with shining pots and pans, and pannikins and skilly-cans hanging in a long row upon hooks above it.

"Sonny-boy, you put this to them little lips o' yourn, now; see?" the white-whiskered sea-cook whispered to the youngster, cuddling close up to him, as an old bitch with a lost kitten picked out of the village pond; holding a pannikin filled to the brim with hot pea-soup to his lips.

The boy sipped, and sipped, and sipped; the warm glow from the big stove going all through him; the hot soup sending his blood running; the cook's friendly arm all twisty-twisty about him; the stubble-faced bosun standing by.

"Solomon," said he, "you let me know when you've got 'im all-sir-garney, an' I will find the little lost beggar a 'ome."

Digitized by Google

THE wind piped across the Bay of Biscay; the clipper rolling, pitching, swinging to the whistle of it; her six storm topsails bellied, tight as drum-heads—tighter than six drum-heads drumming a regiment to war—her three lower topgallants straining as eager wings of homing pigeons, white, graceful, slender; dainty as the feet of girls who dance beside the bar at Tony Arnaud's, when it's wet weather and the clippers come to port; the fore-and-afters set and humming to the Biscay gale; the man at the wheel stamping his feet, watching the lubber's point swing, singing, "Was you ever down to Noo Orleens?" under his breath, the skipper being in the chart-house not twenty feet from him.

The mate, from the bridge, shouted to the bosun, who was just down from aloft, where he had been to see the sort of job that Tom and Bloody had made on the preventer sheets.

"Bos'," said he, "where's the bloated alderman?"

"The w'ich?" asked the bosun.

"That little 'ungry beggar you picked out o' the shell o' that brace-block a while back, bosun."

"Oh! I clear forgot all about '*im*. Strike my liver pretty pink, sir! I certainly 'ad."

"The skipper wants to see 'im, bosun—at 'is convenience," and the mate winked.

"Solomon, 'ave you seen anything of a w'ite-faced warbler? One o' them little checker-feathered birds wot goes a-peepin' an' a-'oppin', an' a-lookin' for worms when the tide's out, Solomon?" asked the bosun.

"You ain't talkin' to me, mister. I ain't seed no sich a animal."

"Solomon, if you was any bloomin' huglier than wot you be the ship's bell would crack—that's wot's restin' on your kidneys, m'lad. You 'ad better be watchin' your 'ealth."

"Bosun, you don't talk like wot the old woman who raised you 'ad a right to expect, see? Argue religion, pea, bean, or turtle soup—but don't you go for to get personal; not with a squint like wot you keeps in your mug, my son."

"Solomon, the skipper o' this here ship—ain't she a pretty one on a beam wind, eh?—the skipper 'e wants a wisit from that there stray bird o' Paradise wot you've been a-fillin' with thin soup; see?"

"You tell the skipper, with or without my compliments—w'ich ain't a-goin' to damage 'is appetite—*did* you ever 'ear tell of a skipper as wanted canned tripe more'n once a day? Did you, bos'? That when my little chickadee wakes up if 'e wants to come an' wisit—well!—seein' as 'e's skipper o' this 'ere ship, maybe he may; see? You tell the old beggar *that*."

"Solomon, I never 'ad no respec' for any man as cooked on a ship. It's a nigger's trade—a nigger's an' a chink's."

Up went the skinny arm of the sea-cook, and down went the stubble face of the bosun; the bosun running bandy-legged along the deck, Solomon on his tail with a ladle of bean-soup whisking about his ears.

"Sail on the weather bow, sir!" shouted the lookout; Solomon stopping, the ladle upheld above his skull-cap; the bosun stopping, one leg in front of the other, his arms up, his fists doubled, a grin on his face; the mate on the bridge-head peering into the smother; all hands crowding to the fo'csle head to see an inbound clipper slipping through the smoking Biscay sea—the four-mast *Shenandoah*, out of Maine, Frisco for Hamburg with grain; a big ship, a dandy ship, a ship to run, or beat, or carry a wind abeam; a packet to kick up her heels in the face of the Liverpool clippers, the Greenock ships, the wool men from London river.

"'Oof!" said the bosun. "Ain't she a-boomin' though?"

"Was aboard 'er seven year ago—I was 'er bosun," said Tom Swift.

"*You* was'er bosun, was you? You—you broke-down bum, you. You wasn't no more than a common low-down starvin' ordinary—that's wot *you* wasn't, m'lad," said Bloody Quayle.

"Murphy is skipper on her. Oh, ain't 'e just a-givin' 'er 'er pretty 'ead, what?" said Tom, ignoring Bloody.

The *Shenandoah* came toward them, carrying her high kites—flying all her feathers to the Biscay wind; a lady, a lady with a foot for running on the ballroom floor; a big flag breaking out at her fog-smothered peak, a swirl of billows all about her bow.

Climbing high, out of the spray, the hands of the Tyne ship swarmed into the foreshrouds to watch her pass up channel, Solomon, on the topgallant rail, waving the soup-ladle above his head; the carpenter looking out of his shop-door; the steward, his white apron blowing round his neck, peeping from a cabin port.

Digitized by Google

"Give 'er three, bullies—three—all together, *now*."

The sailors of the Tyne ship gave her three; ringing over the gray Biscay sea; ringing as the storm-winds ring amidst the topmast rigging clear and loud.

In the *Shenandoah's* rigging stood the Yankee sailors, watching the outbound packet dip to sea.

"She's a fly-foot packet, boys. I'll bet she can run, eh?" they said.

"Hark to 'em! They're giving us three. Look at the old gazabo on her topgallant rail! I'll bet he's old man Jonah come to life again," said a sailor of the flying *Shenandoah*.

"Give 'em back their three, sons—three an' another. Send 'em to sea right—now, *together*," said the bosun of the booming *Shenandoah*.

The Yankee sailors gave the outbound Tyne ship three, roaring them over the sea; fog dripping in low, half-lifted, wind-drifted, curtains all around the ships: their wailing fog-horns sounding; everything gray.

"Oh, my sonny boy! But ain't old Murphy letting that there packet crack along, now?" cried the red-headed bosun of the big black Tyne ship.

"An' wot, my lad, wot har you hup to 'ere; eh, my little chickadee?" cried Solomon the sea-cook, staring open-eyed at a lad beside him in the rigging, who knelt upon the wet rail, waving his hat, shouting:

"Hoorah! Oh, hoorah! Ain't she pretty, though?"

The *Shenandoah*, out of Maine, that fine Yankee clipper, was gone in the sea-smother; green swirls whirling where they lost her heels in the fog-hid sea; sea-gulls, gray birds, following her shoreward; a low whisper of her fog-horn wailing; echoing, and gone.

"Ooof!" said the bosun. "Some o' you ducks go take a pull on them there weather braces. First thing *you* knows Tim Murphy will be bound around the Horn again, sons—on the heels of this here ship, my lads! Weather braces, weather braces, every one: an' *step lively*," he shouted.

"Oh-ye, oh-yo-ho, heave-oh-heave-oh, haul-away-oh," he bellowed; his back bent and doubled; hauling in upon the weather braces.

"Well, now! Your bloomin' 'ighness, sir, pardon of me for addressin' you; but where the —— did *you* drop in from, eh? An' did you give the skipper a permit for to go to sea?" he asked a lad who stood beside him, with his small hands upon the cold, wet rope.

The skipper was upon the bridge, a wizened little man who looked as though the first breeze that came over the sea might blow him away; a fellow from somewhere up by Anglesea, Holyhead, or some port beside the Irish Sea; a chap raised up on kippered herring and finny-haddy from the Scotch fishing-boats; raised at the sea's side; schooled in a fishing-lugger; boy in a clipper; so long at sea that the scales and the barnacles were about getting a foothold upon the tough hide down his back.

Without so much as blinking a lid, lifting a nostril or saying a word, he stared at the stowaway hauling in upon the weather braces.

The mate, walking aft, called to the boy.

"Son," he said, "what might your name be?"

"They call me 'Slim,' sir. I ain't never 'ad no other name."

"Slim, eh? Well that ain't name enough to sign on no seaman by; not as I'd say so. You come along o' me."

He took him to the skipper on the bridge.

"What's your name, feller?" asked the skipper.

"Slim, sir."

"Slim, eh? Well, that's a fit one too! What's the second part of it?"

"I ain't never 'ad no other, sir."

"Slim, eh? Slim? Well, see here, my youngster—you go for to be a willing hopper, a royalmast greaser of a Saturday morning, a cable chipper an' so on, an' I'm a-goin' to sign you on the articles o' this here ship."

"HE'LL fetch us *luck*," whispered the skipper to the mate.

"That's wot 'e will, sir. I've seed it afore," replied the mate.

THEY called him to the chart-house, there to sign him on upon the ship's articles as an ordinary seaman.

"What will we call him, mister?" asked the skipper of the mate.

"Captain, sir, it's got me. Let's ask the bosun, sir. 'E's got a good 'ead; reads books an' the Bible an' such-like things, quite a deal in the second dog-watch, as I believe."

They called the bosun.

Digitized by Google

"Bosun, here's a hand with no name to him. We've got to have a name to sign him by. We can't just write him down for Slim—'twouldn't look well at the shipping-office."

"No, sir, that's so! I ain't no 'and to name folk, sir; not exceptin' if there's summat a-worryin' of my temper, sir: then to be sure it do come easy-like."

"Ain't you got some books in your room, bos'—a book for instance with names in it?"

"Well, sir, I'll tell you, sir, there's the Bible sure enough, sir. That's chock-a-block full o' names from cover to cover; but we gone an' named the cook out o' that a'ready; an' three o' the foremast hands, too sir. 'Twouldn't look well for the ship to 'ave too many o' they sort o' names—not with the kind o' crew as she's got."

The sailmaker stepped up to the poop, looking for wrinkles in the new mizzen lower topgallant, and they called him to the chart-house.

"Sails, wot would you name a boy if your wife was to 'ave such a thing now, eh?" asked the mate.

Sails opened his eyes wide; his mouth too, so that the needle between his lips fell to the deck; a skein of roping-twine hanging about his neck blowing upon the wind.

"*My wife?* Well! That is news to me. I ain't never 'ad none, sir. Not leastways since I passed the fifty-year mark."

"I'll tell you wot, sir," said the bosun, "you might call 'im Guts, just seein' 'ow 'e's so thin an' little like, an' short o' such things. You could spell it with a Z intsead of a S, then 'e'd look like a Rotterdam Dutchie."

"Please, sir, I ain't no —— Dutchie. I'm from the Tyne, sir," said the boy.

"Well! Now there's a right to a young feller 'avin' a name wot 'e likes the sound of too; that's so. It gets me, sir—I'm done," and the bosun walked away to give an ordinary seaman, who was loafing on his job, a couple of kicks and a cuff or so.

"I'll tell you, sir, wot you do," said the steward, his face showing through the chart-house port. "You just call him Innards; that's the same thing as guts, sir; and there ain't no one's feelin's 'urt no place. That's a good enough name for any one from Salem, Mass., to the Clyde shipyards, seems to me."

"Have you any objection, my lad, to the name of Innards?" asked the skipper.

"No, sir."

So Innards it was from that day on.

AFTER the lad had a meal or so of Solomon's pea-soup, and a piece of hard-tack, the peaked look left his face, and the hunger his eyes; being by nature a lad given to the skinny look he would never be likely to grow fat, even if they gave him canned tripe for every meal, and best Jamaica molasses spread on his hard-tack. He was a handy lad, willing and obliging to his betters; taking smiles from Chips for a calking-mallet handed just when the deck-seam was right for calking, or a "good for you sonny," from Sails for grabbing a skein of twine just as the wind was blowing it overboard; and a grin now and again from one or other of the foremast hands; never a man upon that big black Tyne ship having the taste of a curse for him—which is *not* the way it goes with *most* ordinaries. The result was that, despite the fuss and trouble it had been to find a name for him, and despite the argufying the finding of that name had caused, when one day Tom Swift, coming to the galley for the hash-kid, overheard Solomon call the lad "Twinkle-Bright," Twinkle-Bright from then on was his name all along the decks of that packet.

It was "Twinkle-Bright, take a pot of pork slush, my son, an' skip up an' grease that there main skysailmast down," from the bosun; and, "Twinkles, my lad, go get a pot o' soojie-moojie an' polish the brass-work—an' see as you *polishes* it," from the second mate; and: "Twink, 'ere's a pannikin o' nice canned tripe wot the old man left at supper last night, m'lad. You gobble it up now; an' see as you washes the pannikin afore you brings it back to me, sonny," from old Solomon the sea-cook; and at night, when the weather was fresh, and he couldn't leave the poop himself, the mate would say: " 'Ere, Bright, me boy, pop you down to my room an' cut me up a fill o' 'baccy—an' don't be long. Light it, me lad, afore you brings it up; but don't you go for to take more'n a couple o' whiffs at it yourself, son. Run along now."

In the evening, when all hands were sitting in a ring about the main hatch, Neilson the Norwegian pulling his concertina in and out, or Skows the Swede blowing on his flute, making sounds such as the blackbirds make when the green apples

Digitized by Google

start to turn golden, or Bloody Quayle drawing the bow to and fro across Tom Swift's fiddle, and the feet of a couple or so of the hands going *skee-dee, skee-dee,* up and down and round about, old Lon Yont, the Finnish carpenter, would say:

"Keep kerwiet now. De kid iss goin' to sing—sing us a song, Terwinkle, my leedle poy."

Then Twinkle-Bright would stand on the hatch, in the center of the ship's company, and would sing; singing the same song for them over and over; or singing some new song over and over after one of them, until he got it right; while they all sat around him on their haunches, staring up and laughing.

"Zing for us, Dwingle; zing now, zunny."

Twinkle-Bright would sing till the little silver stars twinkled in the face of the deep, blue sea, as they too were beating fingers and toes to the time of the lad's song:

"My gal's a high-born ladee.
She's dark, but not too shadee;
Feathered like a peacock, just as gay;
She's not colored, she was born that way,"

he'd sing; or:

"Nobody knows what fun was there;
Nobody knows, I do declare.
"Nobody knows what fun I see,
No, nobody knows indeed but me,"

or maybe Tom Swift's favorite song—

"Jabbersee ha-kee, jabbersee ho-kee,
Jabbersee dory pory;
Hikee, pikee, sikee, crikee,
Jimmy go paddle your dory."

There was no end to the songs that he sang; and often, when the wind was coming on the beam, at the time for hauling aft the main sheet, they'd call to him to give them a chantey.

"Haul away, haul away, haul away the bowline," his young voice would sing, all along the pipe of the high sea-wind; the refrain coming from the deep throats of the sailors as from ten big bulls all bellowing together:

"Haul away, haul away, haul away the bowline!
Haul on the bowline, *haul!* . . .
Haul away, haul away, may the devil take
your haulin'!
Haul on the bowline, *haul.*"

"W'ISTLE," said Solomon the sea-cook; "w'istle fer a wind."

"I'm w'istlin'," said the boy; and, sure enough, whistling he was; whistling as blackbirds whistle when the little green apples begin to turn gold in June.

For days and days the big Tyne ship had lain, idle as a mushroom when the fairies have hastened home before the dawn, with all her sails clewed up to save them from chafing on the masts and rigging—a great black swan asleep upon the deep blue ocean; motionless, inert, upon a breathless sea; and the water in the tanks down below was running short.

"W'istle, sonny; w'istle," said the red-headed bosun.

"I am a-w'istlin', sir," said the boy, his cheeks puffed out; whistling as the drummer boys used to whistle when the drum-heads were broken in the good old days that were—when drums played the regiments to war.

The sun beat down upon the tall ship from the Tyne, scorching her long black sides, and blazing on her white decks until the pitch ran bubbling everywhere.

"W'istle, you little beggar; w'istle," said Tom Swift and Bloody Quayle, laying down their serving-boards and tar-pots and going forward for their hard-tack and salt pork: without enough water to wet it down with—for the big tanks down below were getting very, very low.

The little Welsh skipper from up by Anglesea came down from the bridge of his becalmed ship, and, walking forward to where upon the main hatch the boy sat, said:

"Whistle, m'lad. Whistle for all you're worth. Fetch us a wind and some rain to fill up the tanks."

"Yes, sir—I'm a-w'istlin', sir," said the boy; scarce stopping to say it.

Chips, the carpenter, came aft to the mizzen fiferail, taking a sounding of the water-tanks below; shaking his head as he pulled the line up.

"Stooard," said the skipper, "you're goin' to have to cut the water down again.

"Aye, aye, sir. 'Ow much will I cut it, sir?" asked the steward.

"Three tablespoons apiece all around; but you be sure an' keep young Twinkle's w'istle wet."

"W'ISTLE, sonny; for the love of Mike, *w'istle;* fetch us a bit of a breeze," said Solomon the sea-cook, who hadn't had water to make soup with now for a full week—since the steward cut the allowance three tablespoons all around.

Digitized by Google

"W'istle; for the love of Mike, w'istle," whispered Belayin'-Pin, the red-headed bosun.

"W'istle, w'istle, w'istle," said Tom Swift and Bloody Quayle, all of a breath; as they shied a belaying-pin apiece at a fat rat, who sat upon his haunches staring up at the boy.

The boy quit whistling.

"W'istle—hey, you little blighter, w'istle for the wind," cried every one anywhere near the lad.

"Please to not throw no more belayin'-pins nor nothin' at the rats. The rats is my friends," said young Twinkle-Bright.

The skipper on the bridge, hearing the lad's piping voice, blew his whistle for the mate.

"Mister, you tell all hands to come aft," he said; and when that order was obeyed, and Neilson, Skows, Lon, Tom and Bloody, Dane Yohanssen, Dicky Blunt the other ordinary seaman—who got nothing but kicks for being such a crooked little swab as he was—and every one else, were aft under the bridge head:

"Men," said the skipper, "if any one of you men so much as throw a crumb of hard-tack at the tail end of the smallest rat aboard this here packet— Well! You watch out for yourselves, that's all. Go forward."

THE ship had lain so long becalmed that she was drying up, and becoming *too dry for her steel ribs to sweat any longer:* so that there were no longer little driblets of sweat for the rats to lick at when they grew thirsty.

"Whistle, my son—please to keep whistling," said the chief mate, watching the boy's puffed cheeks.

The boy had ceased to speak when they spoke to him; squatting cross-legged on the main hatch; rising sometimes to stretch his little legs, and without ceasing to whistle, dancing round and round upon the top of the hatch—while the stars peeped out from the big blue sky, winking at the bright eyes in the blue mirror below them.

"Mister, there's a hand in the fo'csle wot is gettin' awful low: wot with the 'eat an' wot with the thirst, sir," said Belaying-Pin one evening to the mate.

"Tell that there lad to keep a-whistling. Don't let him stop. Give him all the water he can swaller all the time; so's he can whistle for a wind," said the skipper; "but tell him not to whistle no *tunes* till arter the corpse is decent buried, sir;" for the hands were starting aft, carrying a stretcher upon which lay the first thirst-perished sailor.

They laid the canvas-shrouded form upon the quarter rail; gathering all about, staring at it; each wondering how it felt, or *whether* it felt, to be all stitched up in that fashion and laid upon the railing.

The skipper, searching for a book to read the burial from, found none; for the rats were everywhere, nibbling this and nibbling that, at paper, and at clothing, and at odds and ends of all sorts—but with the deep-sea knowledge of the sea-going rat never touching ropes or sails, or amberline or hause-line, or any other ship's gear.

The skipper, coming to the quarter-deck, with the hands all standing waiting, said what came to his mind of the burial words for such as die at sea; getting them a bit mixed, and scratching his head.

"Man that is born of woman," said he; "man that is born of woman—" and looked to the mate; but the mate was looking over the water and did not meet his eye.

"Man that is born of woman," said he, "has but a short time to live. He goes up like a main topmast staysail, and comes down like a flying jib."

He nodded to the men at the foot of the stretcher; and, tipping it, they let the sewed-up sailor glide softly to the face of the great blue mirror below; where he made a ring of ripples and a few breaking bubbles, and was gone—to old Mother Carey, and her man Davy Jones.

"FILL the little blighter full o' water. Keep him whistling. There's another hand that ain't goin' to last much longer if the wind don't come," said the red-headed bosun.

"Look at yon owld rat," whispered a man from the Geordie country, his lips all dry and cracking. " 'E's piebald!"

Years and years ago that big black ship had carried a grain cargo out of Melbourne, and there the rats had come aboard her. Amongst them had been one white rat, suborned from a gentleman's home up in the high-brow part of town; and ever since then there had been piebald rats aboard her, sometimes one, sometimes two, sometimes a dozen, and now a whole unnumbered multitude.

Digitized by Google

"STOOARD, you've got to dock the water allowance again," said the skipper.

" 'Ow much will I dock it, sir?"

"Three tablespoons apiece all around: but be sure you keep young Twinkle's whistle wet."

There was no longer soup, or tea, or coffee; and as for brushing a man's teeth of a Saturday evening, as is the custom at sea, that was out of the question—unless a man used salt water; which, owing to thirst, couldn't be done.

The ship lay still and silent; a black swan drowsing by night and by day.

It was late of an evening when the hands were sitting silently about the hatch, their hands clasped round their knees, their heads bowed down, their lips dry and cracking, their throats as nutshells in November, that the bosun of the rats came on deck for a drink. They saw him pass them on his way from below the booby hatch, where he lived, to the carpenter's shop; where, just inside the door, Chips kept an old marmalade tin with his allowance of water in it.

The carpenter on a ship serves out the water allowance each day; and *you* know what *that* means—that means *water for Chips.*

The bosun of the rats was a black rat; blacker than the best Welsh coal from the mines by Dean Forest; blacker than the hat the Pope of Rome wears to church upon a Spring-time Sunday; blacker than the wing of an old, old crow. He carried the end of his long tail twisted over his weather shoulder and walked with a roll in his gait; his two front paws upon his hips, and both eyes shining.

Going to the carpenter's shop, he wetted his whistle, smacking his lips a time or two, whisking his tail to weather and to lee; and, returning past the hatch, took a long look at the foremast hands sitting glum and thirst-perished; nodding to young Twinkle-Bright, who was whistling a topsail-halyard chantey tune.

The ship was upon the far edge of the doldrums, in a hopeless flat calm; but, just over the low rim of the southern horizon, the bosun of the rats knew well enough that the doldrum squalls were passing to and fro, drifting hither and yon—just under the dip of the sea-rim.

He stared hard along the decks; with all hands doomed for Mother Carey if something didn't happen soon; ne'er a man stirring; no one to strike the bell for the closing of the watches; no one to go to the wheel or to the lookout; only Solomon the sea-cook, sitting upright in his galley staring at his image in a shiny kettle.

"Solomon," muttered the old cook, "what good's pea-soup to you now, eh? Ah, you silly old swab!"

The carpenter, in his shop next door, heard him. The carpenter's lips were wet; and toward midnight he got up to take another sip from the old marmalade can just inside the door. Reaching down for the can, he was aware of a scurrying crowd of rats that came and went in never ceasing numbers; striking a light, he held his lantern high; at the very moment when the sonorous tones of the ship's bell tolled out across the dark blue sea; echoing up and down, and in and out, and round about the deck-houses and hatchways.

Clang-clang, clang-clang, clang-clang, clang-clang.

Chips was struck all of a heap by the strange tones of the bell, as well as by the sight that met his eyes.

In and out, through his shop door, came and went the rats, black, brown, gray, and piebald; every one with his eyes shiny bright and his tail tucked tight over his weather shoulder. He heard the snores of the hands upon the hatch, and the shrill whistle of Twinkle-Bright whistling as the mocking-bird whistles when the mulberries are turning purple toward the end of May. Going to the galley, he sat down at the side of Solomon.

"Sol, old son, who was it struck the forward bell?"

From his shop came the ripple of a thousand feet; but never the rustle of a rat-tail dragging on the floor; for they were, one and all, tucked over their owner's weather shoulders and out of the way—for there was work to be done before dawn came riding down the sky.

"I ain't never' eard young Terwinkle v'stle that way before," said Chips.

Aft, upon the cabin skylight, sat the mate, and the second mate, and the skipper; and the steward with them; each fast asleep.

On deck the bosun of the rats was giving orders, his eyes shining, his two front paws upon his hips, his tail upon his weather shoulder.

Far aloft there was a soft, long, rustling

Digitized by Google

sound;ras, the buntlines and the clewlines let go from deck, the big sails dropped along the spars. There was the long, loud groan of a dry tackle-block, and of another, and yet another; as, one by one, the sails were sheeted home by endless companies of rats.

Upon the main hatch Twinkle-Bright had quit his whistling; standing with his hands in his pockets, his hat cocked on one side, his lips parted; singing a chantey for the rats to pull by.

"Rouse a main-sheet chantey, Twinkly boy, so's these lubbers o' mine can pull; so they'll haul out the sheet together—let 'er go," said the bosun of the rats.

"Haul away, haul away; oh, we're hauling night an' mornin'," sang Twinkle-Bright at the very top of his voice.

"Squeak, you lubbers," shouted the bosun of the rats; and squeak they did; great and small, pied and black and brown; every last rat upon the sheets squeaking all together. Aft came the sheet of the foresail; down came the big white belly of the main-sail, and the cross-jack with it; the topsail sheets groaning above them.

The black Tyne ship lay then, for all the world as a black swan asleep with its wings lopped down; as though it had forgotten to fold them.

"Vot's a-goin' on on deck, do you suppose now, Sol?" asked Chips.

"Pea-soup, bean-soup—ah, wot good's canned tripe to you now, you silly old swab?" said Solomon the sea-cook, staring at his image in the shining kettle on the stove.

On deck the bosun of the rats was busy; running hither and thither; giving a kick here, and a cuff there; shouting:

"Lay back, you lubbers. Lay back, now —*all together.*"

"When I was young and in my prime
On a black Tyne ship I served my time,"

sang Twinkle-Bright at the very top of his voice.

"That's it, Twinkly, m'lad. Sing," cried the bosun of the rats; and sing he did; singing till the courses and the lower topsails were sheeted home; every last one of the rats squeaking for the chorus of the chantey.

"Aloft, you lubbers, now—hop along. *Step lively,*" shouted the bosun.

Up went the rats; swarming into the shrouds, climbing, scurrying, scrambling for a good place upon the yards, or for a good footing along the foot of one or other of the sails. When they were all aloft, with their faces to the sails, hanging for dear life with all their toes, the bosun shouted—

"Now then, m'lads—all together—*blow.*"

And blow they did; whether black, brown, gray, or piebald; keeping their cheeks puffed out tight, and their eyes shut; hanging tight with their toes.

The bosun went to the topgallant rail, peering down at the still water alongside.

"Clang-clang, clang," three bells was struck, for one-thirty already upon the big forward bell, by an old piebald rat with broken toes who could not get aloft; so had stayed on deck to coil up the ropes and to strike the bell.

"Blow, you lubbers, blow now," shouted the bosun; and blow they did.

"Sing there, Twinkly, m'lad. Sing for 'em."

And sing he did:

"A big black ship came down the river,
Blow, boys, blow.
A big black ship came down the river,
Blow, my bully boys, blow."

"Wot's a-goin' on on deck now, do you suppose, Sol?" asked Chips in the galley.

"Pea-soup, bean-soup, cracker hash and dandy funk—ah, you silly old swab. What good'll they do you now, eh?" said Solomon to his reflection in the kettle on the stove.

The bosun saw the bubbles coming; his long tail twitching with excitement. The water was slowly slipping by.

From below the sea-rim a dark cloud was rising—doldrum squalls crossing the sky. The bosun sniffed; the rats up aloft stopping for one single second to sniff—all of them sniffing a rain far away. Across the deck, abaft the mizzenmast, stretched the rain-sail from side to side, as it had for week by week; waiting for the rain to fill the tanks down below.

The broken-toed rat went to the bosun.

"Bos'," said he, "I'm goin' to the wheel. Send a couple o' dozen o' the boys to give me a hand, will you?"

"Twenty o' the biggest o' you lubbers to the wheel," shouted the bosun; and without waiting to come down the rigging two dozen big rats just dropped to the deck and scampered aft to the wheel; passing the skipper, mates and steward without so much as staying to stare at them; grabbing the wheel-spokes they whirled the wheel around,

Digitized by Google

laying the ship's head for the dark cloud hovering on the sea-rim.

Slowly, as a big black swan awakening from long dreaming, the Tyne ship stole through the water; her courses and her three lower topsails blown into by innumerable companies of rats.

The golden moon arose, peeping from under the sea-rim, spangles of glimmering gold seeming to fall from her as she rose toward the high sky; gleaming upon the tall masts of the Tyne ship; on her white courses and topsails, on Twinkle-Bright dancing round and round, his hands in his pockets, his feet going faster than the feet of Pat O'Halloran at a Wexford wake.

"Blow, you lubbers, blow. Keep a-blowin'," shouted the rat bosun.

All about young Twinkle-Bright the drowsy sailors slept, their heads bowed down; snoring as so many lob-eared China pigs; not a move amongst them all till Twinkle-Bright went and whispered in the weather ear of the rat bosun.

Off to the galley went the bosun of the rats, and over the doorstep he hopped; standing before Chips and Solomon, his front paws upon his hips, his tail cocked over his weather shoulder, his two eyes shining.

"Water," said he; "all the water you've got in them marmalade cans. Now hop along, you lubbers; hop along."

"A pan full o' hard-tack, a dollop o' pork slush, six fat cockroaches— Ah! There's the makin's of a fine cracker hash for Sunday dinner; an' wot good's it ever a-goin' to do you now, you silly old swab?" said Solomon, staring at his image in the kettle.

"Water," said Chips. "Aye, aye, sir; water it is, sir. I'll go fetch it."

And off to his shop he went, to bring the old rusty marmalade can with a pint of water in its bottom.

For a minute Twinkle-Bright ceased his dancing and his singing; holding the rusty can to the lips of Tom and Bloody, sleeping side by side upon the hatch.

"Sip, sip, sip," went the two of them; "sip, sip, sip," opening their eyes, and staring straight into the face of the swiftly rising moon.

"Bloody," whispered Tom, "if *I* was as ugly as wot *you* be, —— me if I wouldn't jump over the side an' say, ' 'Ere goes nobody,' —— me now if I wouldn't."

"Tom," said Bloody, "if *I* didn't 'ave no more sense than wot *you* 'ave, you boardin'-'ouse bum, you ring-tail cat from 'Tanarivo, I'd— Well! S'welp me! Wot the— Wot's a-goin' on aloft, Tom? Heh?"

Twinkle-Bright bent down, whispering into his old friends' ears; and, rising, the two of them went to the fo'csle; returning in an instant; Tom with his fiddle under his arm, and Bloody with the flute from Skows, the Norwegian's sea-chest between his lips.

"Blow, you lubbers, blow," cried the bosun of the rats to his people on the yards.

The round gold moon peered down upon the hatch of the black Tyne ship where sat the crew of drowsy, thirst-perishing sailors; and in the middle of them, his hands in his pockets, his hat cocked over one eye, Twinkle-Bright waiting for Tom and Bloody, who were tuning up the fiddle and the flute.

"Tee zee zing twee," went the fiddle-bow along the strings.

"Come along now, Bloody, you monkey-faced gazabo," said Tom Swift.

"Come along now, you ring-tail cat from 'Tanarivo—I'm wid ye," said Bloody Quayle; and away they went, fiddling and fluting as the first little sprinkle of a rain began to fall upon the parched decks of the black Tyne ship; and the first faint puff of a doldrum squall began to belly out the courses and the lower topsails.

"Light right astern, sir," shouted the broken-toed rat at the wheel; and, looking astern, the fiddler and the fluter saw, creeping slowly over the sea, a red and a green light; with, above them, towering to the stars, the courses, lower and upper topsails, lower and upper topgallants, royals, skysails, and moonsails of a lofty clipper ship. Never stopping their fiddling and their fluting, Tom and Bloody arose to their feet, gazing at the oncoming ship.

"Tim Murphy an' the old *Shenandoah*— that's who *that* be," sang out Tom Swift. "She's a-comin' down on us an' a-fetchin' the wind with 'er."

"On deck, you lubbers; on deck, an' sheet home all sail," shouted the bosun of the rats; and, never waiting to come down the rigging, every last rat dropped nimbly to the deck; running in thousands to the sheets and braces.

"Sing for 'em, Twinkles, m'lad," shouted the bosun of the rats; and sing for them he did; Tom fiddling to the tune of it, Bloody fluting to the tune of it; Twinkle-Bright's

Digitized by Google

feet going round and round the hatch, his hat cocked half over one ear, his hands in his pockets.

"Vot you suppose is goin' on on deck?" asked Chips, sitting before the galley stove.

"Cracker hash, dandy funk, pea-soup, bean-soup, *coffee for all hands*—the rain's a-fallin'," said Solomon, arising and reaching for the big skilly pots. "You git out o' here, Mister Chips; I'm a-goin' to be busy."

Up got Chips, and, walking aft, put a hand upon the mate's shoulder; whispering in his ear—

"Rain in the rainsail, mister—the tanks is fillin' up."

Up got the mate, saying in the little Welsh skipper's ear—

"Rain in the rainsail, mister—the tanks is fillin' up."

Up got the little Welsh skipper, with his face turned aft over the moon-glimmered sea; where, stealing down upon the black Tyne ship, there came a lofty clipper with her high kites flying; her red and green side lights blinking as the eyes of a witch-wife of the sea.

"Rouse the hands. Look alive, mister mate. Hop along now—all hands to the sheets and braces."

"Go below, you lubbers; go below now," shouted the bosun of the rats; and in less than three and one half seconds devil a rat was there left on the white decks of that Tyne ship.

"Sheet home the upper topsails," roared the mate; "sheet home all," and under his breath he said to himself: "Who in thunder set them courses an' lower tops'ls? My, ain't I been a-dreamin' though?"

Neilson, Skows, Lon Yont, Dane Yohanssen, Dicky Blunt, the three foremast hands with names out of the Bible, the carpenter and steward, the sailmaker and second mate and the red-headed bosun were all a-hauling and a-heaving on the sheets and braces; setting sail in a hurry, with the Yankee clipper coming up astern.

"Sing for 'em; sing, Twinkle-Bright," shouted the chief mate, and sing for them he did—

"Haul away, haul away, haul away the bowline,
Haul on the bowline, *haul.*"

Everything was set; all hands standing with their hands cupped, catching the rain; Twinkle dancing up and down the hatch singing:

"My gal's a high born ladee.
She's dark, but not too shadee;
Feathered like a peacock, just as gay;
She's not colored, she was born that way."

The rain fell faster, the moon growing fainter, the wind in the white sails lifting the ship along.

On the topgallant rail stood Solomon the sea cook, waving a soup-ladle above his head; the carpenter staring from his shop-door; the steward, his white apron blowing round his neck, peering from a window.

Carrying all her high kites, the *Shenandoah* was alongside them, flying all her feathers to the doldrum squall; a lady, a lady with a foot for running on the ballroom floor; a big flag breaking at her rain-smothered peak by the faint light of the moon; a swirl of billows all about her bow; her hands crowding in her shrouds to watch the black Tyne ship.

"Give 'er three, bullies—three; *all together now.*"

The sailors of the Tyne ship gave her three; ringing over the rain-hidden, moon-glimmered sea; ringing as the big winds ring, high in the topmast rigging—clear and loud.

In the *Shenandoah's* rigging stood the Yankee sailors, watching the pretty black clipper lifting to the rising swell.

"She's a fly-foot packet, boys. I bet she can run, eh?" said a sailor.

"Hark to 'em—they're giving us three. Look at the old gazabo on her topgallant rail—I'll bet that's old man Jonah come back to life again."

"Give them back their three, sons—three and another. Now—*all together.*"

The Yankee sailors gave the Tyne ship three, roaring them across the sea; rain dripping from shroud and sail and backstay; voices echoing, and lost in the thickening squall; everything silver in the glimmer of the moon.

On the hatch of the Tyne ship stood young Twinkle-Bright, waving his hat; shouting at the top of his voice:

"Hoorah! Oh, hoorah! Ain't she pretty though?"

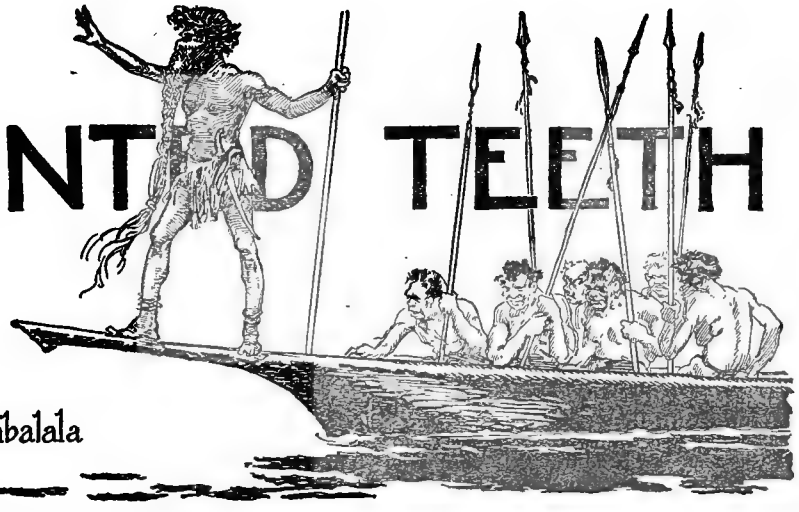
ON THE bridge of the black Tyne ship stood the mate beside the little Welsh skipper.

"He fetched us luck, mister," said the skipper, looking up at his mate.

"That's wot 'e did, sir," answered the mate, looking down at his skipper. "I've seen it afore."

Digitized by Google

POINTED TEETH



by Santie Sabalala

Author of "A Royal Divorce," "Mamoti the Witch-Woman," etc.

UM KESO was a slim, yet muscular fellow. Three striking things there were about him—his large growth of bushy, kinky hair, his sharpened teeth and his long arms, which reached almost to his knees. In the South-African village that he lived in, the other members of the community had the same physical characteristics as he had.

Um Keso strode over to where a *kohla* (council) was being held; and, standing on the outside circle with the *abafana* (young men) newly admitted to the *kohla*, he listened to Posti putting forward the plea that the change from eating one kind of meat to the other be made then instead of waiting till the height of the *Hlokyen*, or Summer. This being in the middle of the tropical Spring, Posti put forward his reason for urging the change. He had been out to his *ma simini* for a few days, and on his return had seen the spoor of a large herd of *inhlovu* or elephants with the smaller marks of young ones.

This then was a great opportunity to make the season change of meat diet, for it might happen that if they waited till the middle of the Summer there would not be so many elephants. What did the *abafandini* (people) say?

Arguments and discussions were tossed backward and forward for quite a time until the winning statement was made that the captives in the stockade were almost depleted and would hardly last until Midsummer. The whole *kohla* was thus won over to Induna Posti's way of thinking.

The only thing that remained to be done was to know where the herd was and to send out a *sabalala* (proclamation) to the other kraals announcing that the change of meat diet had been decided upon and that a great *zingela* (expedition) was to be made up within the next few days. Um Keso was chosen as the one to verify the herd's direction and present *inhlovu* ground. Others were sent away to the different kraals to inform the *indunas* (petty chiefs) of these kraals of the decision of the change of season's meat.

These were the race of Ama Gronqonqo or cannibals, who, for a certain length of time in a year, make meals off their fellow-beings and then change to elephant's meat, the reason being that *umtu* (man) meat is a trifle rich in the Summer or hot months. The Ama Gronqonqo were loathed by the other non-cannibal races, but were tolerated by them until the remarkable native statesman Um Silakaz (Mosilikatzi) made them a peremptory proposal that was tantamount to a command for them to desist from their horrifying practise.

Um Keso left the *kraal* to carry out the commission that he had been sent on. Having got out of sight of the village, he came upon an infant playing by the side of the path. In the bushes he could hear the mother and some companions talking in

"*Pointed Teeth*," *copyright*, 1922, *by Santie Sabalala.*

Digitized by Google

their shrill, high-pitched voices as they ate the wild fruit off the trees. It was evident that they had not been gone long, also that they were coming back, judging by the sound of their voices as they drew nearer.

The baby was a well-fed, plump-looking specimen of his race, who, seeing Um Keso, chuckled and gurgled and held up its two little arms to him. Um Keso grasped one little arm, swung the infant with his left hand into the air and as it came down drew his hunting-dagger with his right hand; and as the happy, squealing infant shot down he caught it on its stomach on the point of his dagger. The happy cry turned to a shrill sigh of pain as the knife plunged into the baby's vitals, and then died.

Um Keso ran his knife a little farther down to make the wound wider. He laid the child on the ground, put an expert hand inside the stomach and brought out the entrails and flung them aside, after which he cut some withes near by, tied the dead infant's hands and feet together, thrust a stick in between them, swung the stick with its burden at the end on to his right shoulder and, smacking his lips, set off again on his mission, satisfied that he would have something to eat that was even better than elephant's meat.

The women kept up their shrill, high-pitched conversation. There was a burst of laughter at what one of them had said as they came upon the pathway, an excited hubbub of voices, then a long, shrill scream as they came upon the entrails. Shrill wailing and sobbing; but the buzzing of the flies as they swarmed around and settled on the entrails was the only answer to the mother's cry.

AFTER a three days' hard and keen scouting Um Keso saw the *inhlovu* or elephants just about sundown as the herd slowly wended its way to the drinking-pool. There were many cows and baby elephants. As Posti the *kohla* (council) man had predicted, he was able to verify that statement as he sat on a *qina* (hillock) eating the calf of the baby that he had killed three days past with the same relish that his civilized brother eats chicken *à la* King.

Having finished his meal, he climbed a tree. Half-way up he found two favorable limbs, the bottom one where he could sit astraddle and the top one where he could lean over with his arms hanging down and go to sleep in certain safety with danger only from a prowling leopard or a wandering tree-snake. Um Keso hardly thought of these dangers as he adjusted himself and fell asleep.

The next morning at daybreak he awoke and climbed down from the tree, and, standing on top of a *qina* (hillock), again looked around the whole surrounding country in order to impress the landmarks on his mind. Having done that, he set out for his own kraal, and in a day or so arrived there and gave the *kohla* (council) his estimate of the number of *inhlovus* in the herd and the whereabouts of its grazing-grounds up near a great *ihlati* (forest).

Swift runners from the ranks of the *impis* (fighting units) were sent out to the different kraals. The kraal that Um Keso lived in was galvanized into great activity as preparations were made for the great elephant-hunt. The *clish-clash* of spears as they were sharpened on wet stones, the twanging of bow thongs as they were tried out and restrung, the *clash-clash* of the village smith as he forged new spear-heads, resounded throughout the day and well into the night.

Pointed-toothed smiles flashed over fires in the night as the *abafana* sang the hunting-song, "*I Tambo Ne Nyama*" ("The Bone and the Meat"). Small boys had a delirious time playing elephant-hunting. Shooting stars fell from above, and the blacksmith forge replied as hot sparks flew heavenward. There was no sleep that night, for the *abafana* (boys) danced the elephant-hunting dance until the purple morn dawned, when the big war-drum rolled out its summons and stopped the revelry. Then the people trooped toward the *kohla* hut, from beside which the sound of the drum-beat came.

The beating of the drum stopped, and a runt-like man with a very ugly face danced beside the drum, rattling a small calabash filled with pebbles. He yelled and howled at the top of his voice like one possessed. His whole body from his neck down to his feet was covered with a dun-colored mud which was dry. Below his eyes he had something fastened across his face and tied at the back; it hung down to his middle—a grass thing made to represent an elephant's trunk.

He stopped his gyrations, and, pointing to different *abafana* in the crowd, called to

Digitized by Google

them, *"Nga neno, nga neno, nga neno"* ("Come hither") and a score or more responded to his call. He swept them swiftly with a fierce look and thundered at them—

"Ne yo yika?" ("Are you afraid?")

They proudly chorused—

"Hayi!" ("No!")

On receiving this answer he walked to the end of the line and looked at the first *umfan* (boy) intently in the eyes for a second or so. The *umfan* returned his look unflinchingly. The little ugly man all covered with mud then put his calabash into a fur bag that he had slung from one shoulder and brought out a sharp-pointed steel instrument and pricked a dozen holes in the *umfan's* chest. The blood spurted out of these holes like water through a sieve and coursed down the boy's middle.

The ugly little man thrust his hand into his fur bag and brought out a fistful of charcoal which he rubbed into the bloody holes. Having done this to his satisfaction, he stopped, and, pointing a stubby, dirty forefinger at the *umfan*, said in a tragic voice—

"U yaku fa nam hla eku zingelene." ("You will be killed at the hunt today.")

The answer to this was merely a pointed-tooth smile, and the ugly little man repeated the ceremony with every *umfan* all the way down the line. When he had finished he dismissed them.

Um Keso, as the one who knew the lie of the land where the hunting was to take place, took command of this expedition. The hunters trooped through the gate in bunches of fours and fives, armed in three or four different ways, some with the light, fast *umkonto* (throwing spear), others with the broad-headed and long-handled *xaba* (ax). Still others had the wicked, barbed *njika* spears; many had quivers full of arrows and the five-foot bow that is generally made out of the hide of a rhinoceros with a bow-string of thonged hide from the back of an ox. Some had grass-made trunks tied in the fashion of a mask across their faces below their eyes; others had white pieces of wood carved in the shape of an elephant's tusks fastened in the same position as the grass trunks. They danced and sang as they went along, showing how they would kill the mountainous *inhlovu*.

Over hills, down by *dongas* and through small forests they journeyed until they came through a certain growth of trees into the open *veld*, where by prearrangement made by the runners the other *abafana* from different kraals were already assembled. There were hundreds of picked *mba zingeli* (hunters) present. The expedition from Um Keso's kraal was greeted with the hilarious song, *"Hayi! Hayi! Itsoni Ke Mbafana"* ("Say It, Ye Men") and responded with *"I Tambo Ne Nyama."* The hunters disported themselves in many ways, whilst the leaders went into council amongst themselves and made their plans accordingly.

The arrangements being to the satisfaction of all, a scouting-party of four under the leadership of Um Keso went ahead to see whether the herd was still in the same place. The party set out, and early next day were able to locate the herd in the same forest and at about the same spot. Um Keso sent back three of his four scouts to guide the large body of hunters.

EARLY next morning Um Keso with his band of hunters, bowmen and spearmen crept stealthily until they were quite close to the herd, which was feeding and dozing near an open space. Mother elephants gamboled and frolicked about with their young in the same way that a cat plays with her kittens, rolling on their backs, all four stumpy legs waving in the air. The baby elephants playfully tried to pull their parents with their small trunks, squealing with pleasure in the tropic morning sun.

The bull elephant, leader of this herd, a colossal piece of jungle life with amber-colored tusks that were wickedly long and seemed tremendous of weight, stood motionless under a large *unpani*-tree, only lifting up his trunk to catch the first breath of any threatening enemy, be it lion, leopard or man. But he smelled nothing, not even Um Keso's band, though they were not so very far away; but they had taken the hunter's precaution of coming up on the windward side of the herd.

There was a sudden twang of an arrow sped, then another and another, then a whole chorus of them, not unlike a great stringed orchestra playing a snappy dancing-score.

The bull, hit in his left eye, set up a mighty trumpeting. What had seemed in the dark shadows of the early morning to be tree-trunks were merely the legs of those of

Digitized by Google

the herd that had been dozing or feeding off the branches of the trees. Under the rain of arrows they milled around like frightened cattle. The bull trampled baby elephants under his ponderous feet and thrust the cows aside in his pain, rage and fright. The air was filled with the loud, discordant, frightened trumpeting of the herd.

With one accord the herd stopped its milling and stampeded blindly in one mad flight. The rapid snapping of big trees sounded like a great barrage. Hunters popped out suddenly everywhere, shouting like mad; spears flashed as they hurtled through the air and sank into the sides of the flying herd. The dust flew thick and high until it became as dense as a fog. The hunters sneezed; baby elephants left behind in the mad flight squealed in fright.

The pain-maddened bull thrashed around lustily and trumpeted loudly. Eager *abafana* closed in on him, and some of them were flattened out by those mighty feet. The bull caught one by the leg, swung him through the air, twirled him about several times and threw him a far distance to fetch up against the side of a tree with every bone in his body broken and his skull flattened out.

Brave *abafana* dodged in and out between the bull's legs, hacking at his knees at every chance they got. One of them did not move fast enough, and that mighty trunk wrapped itself around his neck; and as he was being swung up the body went one way and the head dropped down then and there.

As the dust settled a little two elephants galloped back from the path that the main herd had taken, and, trumpeting all the while, got on each side of the mighty bull, who because of the constant hacking at his knees was on the verge of collapse. The two elephants supported the bull and essayed to take him back to the herd.

He went a few feeble steps, but an arrow shot out his other eye. The blood gushed out of this cavity and streamed down his face, looking like red hot tears. He trumpeted loudly and attempted to go on, but just then was hamstrung at his hind legs. His two would-be rescuers were set upon by a strong force of *abafana*, who brought them down by sheer force of ferocity, using bows, arrows, spears, knives, rocks and clubs, almost tearing them to pieces.

The dust having settled, there were to be seen the dozens of warrior hunters that had been killed in the herd's wild stampede, also the score or more of *inhlovus* that had been either trampled down or had been killed by such spears and arrows as had pierced their hides. Three or four baby elephants rushed about this way and that, trumpeting piteously. An order was given that they be killed immediately. A score or more bows sang; and a shower of arrows fell on the young elephants, killing them outright.

The butchers of the expedition were already skinning the fallen game, carefully separating the tusks from the heads of the males and females and cutting big slabs of meat from the sides of the dead beasts. Fires were kindled, and pointed-teeth smiles flashed everywhere.

Half of the expedition had gone in pursuit of the stampeded herd, for sooner or later a good many of the animals would succumb to the many spear-thrusts and arrow-wounds and fall in their tracks exhausted. Therefore there was no danger of each community represented not having enough *inyama ye nhlovu* (elephant meat) to last them a good while.

The hock of the elephant, the most delicious part, was cooked and eaten. The other portions were to be taken back to the different kraals, which would rejoice in the prowess of their mighty hunters.

A band of *abafana* came up to where Posti was roasting elephant steak with some of the older men and respectfully asked him what was to be done with their dead companions.

"Gather up their spears, bows, arrows and knives," said Posti, "but let them lie where they are; the lions and the hyenas will eat them up," said he.

The sun had set a long time past. Bonfires lighted up the dark forest; the air resounded to the *aba zingelis'* (hunters') voices singing, *"I Tambo Ne Nyama"* ("The Bone and the Meat").

UM KESO'S expedition was met and greeted by the people of his community when they were still quite a way from the kraal. Small boys demanded that they be allowed to carry the large hunks of heavy elephant-meat and staggered homeward under their loads, which the women folk took away from them in order to have it smoked, that they might have some *inhlovu* meat 'way into the Summer.

Digitized by Google

The men, on arrival at the kraal, repaired to the *kohla* (council) hut, where the little man with the ugly face came into their midst and demanded the presence of the *abafana* that he had marked with the death mark. On being informed that every one of them had been killed, he merely remarked, "Why didn't any of you bring back an arm or a leg of one of them?" and flung out of the hut in disgust.

The Spring merged into early Summer and unto high Summer; then the leaves turned bronze, the flashing, many-hued paradise birds flew away and the screeching parakeets got ready to fly. The sun seemed to be made out of burnished brass as the atmosphere became more moist with the nearing of the rainy season; minute white flecks of clouds rode high in the sky until the heart almost stood still with expectancy, and then with a long, warm sigh, a blinding flash and a terrific roar, the rain swished and flooded down.

ABOUT ten days after the first rainfall, the seventh wife in Um Keso's modest household succumbed to the weakness of what all flesh is heir to—death. The very next day his own brother-in-law, related to the wife that had died the day before, gave up the ghost, as the current way of saying goes. The brother-in-law had been living within the household of his own natural parents.

Um Keso had the evening before been visiting his parents by law in order to inform them of the death of their daughter, also to know just what position they would take about the meal that was bound to be made of this wife-daughter. No common understanding had been arrived at. The situation was a rather awkward one; for here was something to eat, but tribal ethics forbade one eating one's own blood and kin. The demise of the brother-in-law further aggravated the situation.

Whilst other races around them buried their dead, this race of Ama Gronqonqo (cannibals) thought it a sheer wanton waste of good eatables to put them in the ground. Why let the hyena dig the corpse up when you can bury it with your teeth?

There came a messenger to Um Keso's hut, out of breath almost, to inform him that two *amadoda* (men) had just been gored to death at a near-by farm, and that their relatives would gladly exchange his dead wife for one of the *amadoda*. Um Keso bade the messenger wait whilst he hastened over to his dead wife's relations and informed them of the glad news that would deliver him and them out of their dilemma.

He hastened back to his own hut and informed the messenger that a double exchange could be made, and at sundown the exchange was made, and the whole community was pleased; for, this being the first *umtu* (human) meat eaten, every one had a taste even if it was only a finger-nail.

Soon after the double exchange of Um Keso's wife and brother-in-law Posti, who had had more than a large portion—a whole arm—given to him—for political reasons—had already decided that the time had come when the change of *nyama* (meat) should be made. Having come to that decision, he, as the leading *induna*, sent word to the different huts in the community that he would like to have a *kohla* (council) with the *amadoda* (men) and *abafana*.

In a very few moments the *kohla* hut was jammed to capacity. There the Induna Posti informed them that the time had come when they should be feeding on *umtu* (human) meat.

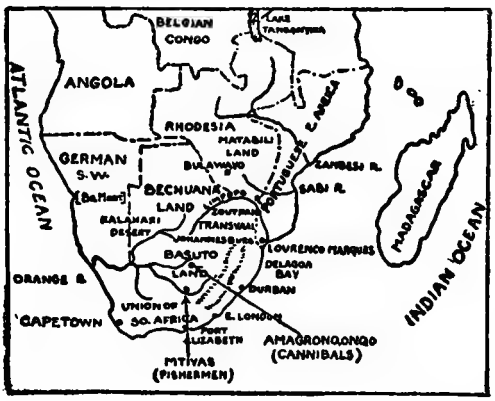
This decision was met with great enthusiasm, for he voiced everybody's mind. Pointed-tooth smiles were evident everywhere; and all the warriors, all the women and children, prepared themselves in the first indispensable way by sharpening and filing their teeth to a sharp point so that when they closed their jaws the teeth fitted into the different spacing, in the same way that a steel rat-trap's teeth fit into the spaces opposite each tooth. The village smith did a roaring business trading teeth-sharpening files.

The medicine-man—not the witch-doctor—did a thriving trade in making charms. The rank and file of the *impis* each day practised grappling each other and throwing one another in the slippery, drizzling rain, especially practising the eyeball hold or thrust. This thrust is done as follows:

The hand—left or right—is placed on the top of the forehead, the thumb hanging down. The thumb is brought into action by merely being thrust into the eye itself, gravity doing the rest. The eye involuntarilly rolls and the thumb follows it. The victim instinctively tries to save that member, with the result that he loses his life.

Digitized by Google

This was practised until each one was letter perfect, as it were, after which for about a solid week all of the *impis* settled down to greasing each other. From morning till night, day after day, they moiled about in grease and oil until everywhere they went was greasy. The huts where they slept, the mats, the floors, were slippery with grease; anything that they touched was left with a greasy mark. And the smell was something abominable.



There came a day when squads of *impis* were sent out to spy on the Amateya race, who were fisher-folk and lived on the banks of the Qaqa River. Because they spent so much time in the cramped confines of their canoes their lower limbs were small in proportion to the upper trunk, yet they had strapping torsos and strong necks with strong arms. This came about simply because they had a great deal of paddling to do. In all, they were a fine-looking lot of people from the standpoint of physique.

The four days went by that were allotted for the scouting-party to see all that they could see, and the fifth day passed without any sign of their reappearance. When the sun rose and set on the sixth without any sign of them the men in the *kohla* became uneasy, and so a second squad was sent out with instructions to the effect that if they met the first squad they were to get the information that they had and afterward kill them.

There was no need of carrying out these drastic instructions, for after traveling for two days the second squad happened on another party of *impis* (warriors) who were going in the opposite direction and had captives in their midst. These captives were none others than the first squad of *impis* that had been sent out six days before.

Um Keso, who was the *induna* of the second band of *impis*, questioned the leader who had the captives under his charge as to how it had come about that he had these men as prisoners.

He was informed that the squad had attempted to kill and make a meal of some of their village head man's wives. Several of their number had been killed and some of the kraals also, in the short mêlée that ensued, but the invading *impis* had been overpowered and taken captive and now were being taken to Posti's kraal in order that he might be able to decide as to what should be done with them.

Um Keso about-faced his squad and returned to his kraal in the company of the *impis* that had his former companions as prisoners. Slipping and splashing along, they at last came to Posti's kraal. Um Keso went to Posti's kraal and informed him what had befallen the other *impis* and added that they were there under a heavy guard.

Posti broke into a terrible rage. Why had not the sons of snakes killed the head man's wives? And if they could not do that why had they let themselves be caught? Posti ranted and raved; for the crime was not in the fact that they had attempted to kill the head man's wives, there being no law against murder; but it was counted against them as a great crime to have been discovered trying to do so.

For their stupidity at having failed at what they had been sent out to accomplish, Posti ordered that their fingers and toes be cut off and an eye each be plucked out, the parts to be eaten by their captors right there and then; and it was done. Um Keso was dispatched immediately on the mission that the ill-fated other *impi* had failed to accomplish in their greed. These mutilated men were banished to the stockade, the toes, fingers and eyes having been eaten. The *impis* from the other kraal also set out on a scouting-expedition, for the whole of the Ama Gronqonqos (cannibals) were getting ready to replenish their human pens and have *umlu* (human) meat all through the rainy season.

Four days later Um Keso and his band of scouts returned very jubilant and all in good health because of their greased bodies,

Digitized by Google

which shed water in the same way a duck's back does. The information brought back was very satisfactory and cheering; for the Amateyas were sticking close to their kraals by the river-banks and did not venture out on the river so much because it was rising. This promised a very easy conquest for the Ama Gronqonqos.

The *impi* (regiment) in Posti's kraal was called together and marched out into the dark night, the lashing rain and howling wind. The cold, drizzling, gray morning dawned, to show hundreds of naked men with shaven heads bent against the driving rain, which trickled and ran off their bodies like quicksilver. They were armed with a weapon that was a battle-ax and a knobbed stick combined. Some had daggers in sheath-cases tied around their middle. Here and there a man carried a quiver full of arrows and a large bow. Each had some dried meat—it looked very unappetizing—either hanging from their necks, tied with a piece of sinew, or else fastened to their sides on the same thong or sinew that held the dagger.

As the day lightened the *impi* broke into song, singing, "The Bone and the Meat." Different verses were improvised and sung, but the chorus was the same all the time.

The scouts were strung out at different intervals in amongst the warriors all along the line.

Late in the afternoon it began to rain harder with the crackling of distant thunder; light flashes of lightning showed. The men's bodies steamed, for a forced march was being made. Night fell, with the rain coming down like a sheet of silver, the hundreds of the *impi's* feet making a sucking noise in their now rapid stride.

AT MIDNIGHT a halt was made. Um Keso and several scouts went forward to get the right location. The rain had stopped, and the stars twinkled above; but the edges of dark clouds could be seen, showing that a storm was brewing.

To the waiting *impi* there was borne the sound of mighty rushing waters that told them that a large body of water had overflowed its banks. Little unseen streams ran all around them, bub-bub-bubbled in seeming joy; others went whispering along; and some were merely one continuous light snore.

Um Keso and the three scouts came back; a short council was held; the order to go forward was given; and the *impi* rippled along. The stars vanished and the wind sighed. There was a sharp flash of lightning, a long roll of thunder, a flash, a crack, a roaring burst of thunder, a blinding flash, a howl of wind, the *sweesh* of falling rain——

There was a sudden, thunderous cry from hundreds of throats of:

"*Hehl Gronqonqo! Si ngama Gronqonqo!*" ("Cannibals! We are the cannibals!")

A flash of lightning slashed the dark night, showing hundreds of figures leaping over the flimsy fence that did not protect the kraal. The Amateya men awoke from their slumbers and groped about for their weapons, for they knew that it must be some kind of a raid; and, half-way armed, they emerged from the warmth of their huts to the cold, driving rain which almost paralyzed their limbs for a moment or so. But the cannibals pitched into them blindly and madly, roaring their battle-cry.

The water bubbled and swished as the cannibals and Amateya grappled and slipped in the dark. The raiders' weapons were useless; for it was impossible to use them, as they were continuously being lost every time a warrior slipped and let go his hold of his weapon in order to save himself.

Flashes of lightning showed groups of men lashing and thrashing about in the water, making the conflict seem like a school of dolphins playing in the sea instead of human beings in a desperate fight for life.

The flood-gates of heaven broke loose as the rain came down in torrents. The water rose waist high, rapidly then chest high as the river overflowed its banks still farther.

The cannibals were not crying their battle-cry so lustily now, but there were many sounds of people spitting out water, and harsh coughs and sobs of those who had been ducked. The water had entered many huts, and the women, being used to this, had left them and gone to where the shore used to be and with their children got into and on the canoes and rafts that were still there. Half-grown boys labored with the paddles, and, in drifting about, the numerous cross-currents carried them past many desperate battlers. Some of the cannibals tried to climb aboard, but were beaten off by these brave young paddlers.

The cry of "*Amateya! Amateya!*" grew constantly. Even the shrill-voiced paddlers took it up, and were able to help their

Digitized by Google

battling elders. These half-grown boys broke many paddles on the head of the struggling, fighting and cursing cannibals. They were able to distinguish their enemies by the very simple way of calling out their tribal battle-cry, "*Amateya.*" If the struggling person did not respond, a paddle whistled through the air and crashed against his skull.

The storm raged until dawn, when as by magic it stopped. The sun, struggling through the racing clouds, shed light on the hundreds of floating dead. Some were caught by the branches of submerged trees and vines. Others went floating swiftly by with the rushing current to stop suddenly in mid-stream and in defiance of gravity sink slowly against the stream—the crocodiles were having a big feast for once.

On the branches of the trees were many Amateya who had saved themselves, first by swimming and then by climbing the trees. As the light grew stronger those in the trees were able to identify each other.

On the branches of a large *umtati*-tree there were in various positions a hundred or so men of both factions looking like black grapes. No sooner did they discover each other's identity than the trees became animated. Desperate hand-to-hand encounters took place.

Men fell into the swift-moving waters to sink, and only now and then would one pop up and swim with strong strokes to a near-by tree. Sometimes they were able to reach a tree in safety, sometimes not, the matter depending upon whether a crocodile was engaged just then or not.

From the tree there came bellows and howls of pain as the cannibals worked the cruel and deadly eye-thrust on the Amateya. Eyes dropped to the water from the tree like so many ripe apples in a Summer wind.

The advantage was all with the cannibals whilst they were in the trees, for with their greased bodies the Amateya could not get a hand-hold on them; but whenever a cannibal and an Amateya fell to the water the Amateya would rise up and the cannibal drown, for the former was a fisherman and could swim, the latter a landlubber who swam like the proverbial brick.

A chance raft containing several women and their children drifted under the branches of a tree with two half-grown boys paddling it. The Amateya in the tree who happened to see it took flying leaps without hesitating and landed amidst the half-frightened women and children. Soon men were dropping so swiftly that their splashing bodies looked like bombs from an invisible aeroplane with the raft as the target.

The cannibals jumped on top of the whole squirming mass of people, scratching and biting them with their pointed teeth until their flesh hung on them in ribbons. Um Keso and Posti with a score or more of warriors of their *impi* were among those who had set on the hopeless Amateya. Um Keso grabbed a branch of a tree as they were passing; and, bracing himself, he exerted all his strength to bring the raft closer to the tree-trunk that they might tie up to it with some of the wild vines that clung to it. With the help of some of his companions they were able to bring the raft alongside the tree and tie up by it. By now their prisoners were absolutely cowed, even the men.

Um Keso, by order of Posti, with some others of the band, broke off heavy tree-limbs and let them fall down in the water beside the raft, after which they fashioned the branches in such a way that they became nets which caught the dead Amateya and their own former companions. As the bodies were salvaged they were tied neck by neck with the vine-growth from the tree. In this way plenty of *umtu* (human) meat was to be, and was being, saved; so that when the river went down the cannibals could have it carried back to their *kraals* by those Amateyas who were still alive, especially those on the tree-tops; for Posti was determined to have them, even though more than half of his *impi* had been wiped out in the night, having been drowned through their inability to swim, or having been ducked to death by the canny Amateya men.

The day wore on, and again the rain began to fall. When night came the Amateya heard Um Keso, Posti and their companions crushing bones in their teeth—fingers of the dead corpses. The lightning flashed and revealed smiles with pointed teeth.

THE next day had hardly dawned when there loomed up on the broad expanse of the river a large fleet of rafts and canoes. The hearts of Um Keso and his friends sank as the fleet came nearer

Digitized by Google

and nearer. The Amateya in the branches of the trees shouted loudly and pulled faces at Um Keso and his friends on the raft.

The young warriors urged Posti to untie their raft and drift down with the current rather than remain there and be killed out of hand by the horde on the coming fleet, for even to their landsmen's eyes they were able to perceive that these were war canoes. Posti turned on them in a towering rage and cried—

"*Solo u myana!*" ("You sons of dogs.") They slunk away from him.

The fleet came within hailing-distance. The Amateya shouted greetings eagerly, told of their surprize and mistreatment at the hands of the cannibals and pointed to the raft where Um Keso and his companions stood in panic. Posti stood a little way off, his face inscrutable.

The Amateya kept up their confusing noise; the fleet drew near to what once had been the shore and quite close to the trees. A ponderous man stood up in the leading canoe and thundered:

"*Botani! Botani! Ma jaaks!*" ("How do you do, my people?")

Um Keso and his companions were stupefied as Posti yelled in greeting—

"*Gra mben, Susane, gra mben.*" ("Greetings, Susane, greetings.")

For this was one of the other raiding-parties who had gone to the head of the river. It was quite evident that Susane's warriors had been more successful, for five or six canoes were full of healthy-looking men and a few children.

Other smaller canoes came up, paddled clumsily by the *impi* of Susane. In these canoes were nuts and different varieties of fruits which had been brought for the captive Amateya.

Susane ordered his canoe to be paddled up alongside the raft Posti was on, and then he and Posti exchanged information and laid out a plan whereby all the Amateya in the vicinity—on the tree-tops, on the raft and everywhere they could be found—were to be taken captive. Several of the canoes containing warriors were hailed and instructed to terrify the Amateya wherever they were seen, into entering the cannibals' canoes. The canoe warriors so instructed paddled away on their duties.

Amateya on the tops of trees were persuaded to come down by the warriors in the canoes shooting a flight of arrows in amongst the branches. As for those on the rafts, the warriors merely went alongside, got out of their canoes and made the men of the Amateya take their places in the canoes; and, having tied a rude tow-line made out of their thong ropes, forced the prisoners to paddle-tow them at the point of the arrow.

The captives in the canoes and on the rafts were brought alongside Susane's canoes and Posti's raft for inspection. The two leaders seemed very well satisfied, and Susane ordered that some of the nuts and fruits in the canoes be given to the captives of Posti. The captives ate what was given to them with great relish, for they were given enough to satisfy them; and thus they were warmed up somewhat, although the wind was cold and the air chilly.

Susane gave the order to cast off, and the fleet started down the river, carried by the swift current. The remnants of Posti's *impi* crowded on the rafts available, whilst Posti's own raft had been lashed to the side of Susane's canoe.

All along the broad river the country was half-submerged. Now and then a herd of hippopotami would rise up suddenly, and, seeing the fleet, would make a dash to upset it, only to be thwarted by the racing current.

Late in the afternoon a sand-bank loomed up in front of the fleet, looking like a yellow arm stretched out to stop them. The fleet made straight for it, as it had been Susane's intention to do so ever since the time when the flood had spoiled the original plan of going back to his kraal with his captives by land.

The fleet arrived at the sand-bank, and the warriors got out before the captives. Some of the *impis* were sent away in order to gather and cut as many forked sticks as would be needed. About a half-hour later these warriors returned, dragging the bundles of forked sticks which they had cut and hacked down with their spears and battle-axes.

The necks of the captives were fitted into the forks, one fork in front and another behind, and the two were joined together on the side of the neck. They were then wrapped around with thongs off the bows. This was done to all the captives; even the little children were "forked."

The captives were divided up into different groups or bands, strung out with so many to a stringed line. This done, the

Digitized by Google

order was given for the first line to move. When they had gone a pace another started, then another, until all of Susane's captives with the warriors guarding them were kraal-bound.

Susane and Posti saluted each other, grounding their spears hard on the sand, and then Susane with his *Amapakati* (counsellors) left and disappeared into the gloom of the forest. Posti called to Um Keso and asked if everything was satisfactory. Um Keso replied in the affirmative.

Posti went down the line looking at each group closely. Had he been born in civilization he would have become a capitalist or gone into the investor's-mortgage business and become wealthy, for he was absolutely cold and took nothing for granted.

Satisfied, in a hard voice he ordered—"*Pambele.*" The *indunas* unconsciously responded to his mood and in a domineering manner ordered their particular lines forward. One by one they passed by Posti's motionless figure.

As the last line went by under the charge of Um Keso, Posti looked at the canoes and rafts, then turned on his heel. They, the canoes and rafts, had been of use for a purpose; that was enough; and into the falling night behind his captives and *impi* Posti strode. This was to be a forced march, and so the line slipped and tripped and picked itself up. Children whimpered and stumbled in their weariness.

Those who fell down and did not immediately get up were freed of their forks; and later on, above the slopping of many feet and the dripping of the water from off the leaves of the trees, a child's terrified shriek rent the air as a skulking leopard pounced on its spinal cord and sucked the warm, living blood.

ON THE afternoon of the next day late, in a downpour of rain, Posti's band of captives arrived at his kraal. The men captives carried on their backs those of their companions—women, children and some men—who had been overcome by the forcing pace that Posti demanded.

They were all hustled over to the stockade and into the huts there. Food was brought to them by the women of the kraal, not through any motive of kindness but merely from the standpoint of future provender for the community.

Those captives already in the stockade welcomed the new arrivals, informing them that everything a mortal could desire to have was there; for, strange as it may appear, captives in a cannibal "fattening-pen" very seldom, if ever at all, try to escape. Should it chance that they be released by a non-cannibal race they will seek out or go back to the community's pen and become captives again.

The reason is that they lead a very easy life in the pen. There is no work to be done; the captives just eat, sleep and enjoy themselves in any way that they want to—a life not unlike that of passengers on the palatial floating cities that ply the ocean between America and Europe—though the prisoners know the purpose of those visits that occur every few days when three or four kraal butchers come into their midst and feel the different individuals as to their plumpness and eligibility for some cannibalistic soufflé or pot-pourri dish. Yet again, others worry not, for they know that they are safe from the kraal butcher's knife. Some of these non-worriers are Nature's "skinny Lizzies" and "knobby Bills." Others are the smokers; for be it known that under no circumstances will the cannibals make a meal of a person who is addicted to the soothing weed, the complaint being that the smokers taste bitter.

And so, as has been said, though they know that their lives may be taken any time when the butcher comes in, still the life is pleasing to them even as it is to the trapeze-worker.

When the recent captives had been fed and the *impi* had eaten their fill also, Posti, in the company of the little ugly man who was covered with mud, together with two of the community's expert butchers, went into the stockade and felt more than half of the population there and at last picked out about fifty of the best specimens, men and women. He marched them out and took them down by a certain stream, where he tied their hands behind their backs and set them up to their necks in water. This storage place was so constructed that the few crocodiles would not be able to eat the captives, and was surrounded by a stockade that would keep out wild beasts.

The custom is always to immerse the persons who are to act the leading part in coming festivities up to the neck in water in order to cleanse them and wash their impurities away. This is purely a savage

Digitized by Google

cannibalistic idea unconnected with any religious idea at all.

The time limit is three days. During all that time the victims are fed abundantly and often, and if any complain of the water being cold the matter is immediately remedied by having water heated and poured around them; or else red-hot brands are thrown in that hiss and smoke as they hit the water, and when a certain number have been thrown in the water is really heated in a lukewarm way.

At the end of seventy-two hours the squat drums throbbed out their message of the day's festival to be. A tremendous fire was made. In open-mouthed wonder children watched the drummers on the four big war-drums ply their sticks, and as they went away some voiced their childish ambitions—

"I am going to be a drummer—*rum-rum, tum-tum.*"

Another would reply in scorn:

"No; I am going to be a butcher. Let me feel your arms, legs and thigh. Now your tongue. Pooh! You smell of *indagna* (hemp). Where is your pipe? Bah! I don't want you."

The victims were taken out of the water, their hides looking like the gray of a battleship, their flesh peeling easily and their feet looking pinky white. As they were being marched to the butchering-hut the people looked at them and passed remarks as to how they looked and would taste.

Everybody was filing his teeth. The drums kept beating and the *abafana* danced and sang hilariously, "*Oh, I Tambo Ne Nyama*" (Oh, the Bone, the Meat). The blazing, roaring super-bonfire was like a livid screen, and the madly dancing *abafana* like the figures thrown thereon by some invisible cinematograph machine.

The women shrieked at the top of their voices, waving their arms in the air; children screamed, and men howled in a frenzy:

"*Nyama, nyama! Oh, I zan ne nyama!*" (Meat, meat! Oh, bring the meat!)

In the midst of the screaming, shrieking, howling, frenzied bedlam, the little ugly man all covered with mud led a man who towered above him with big, fine, strapping chest like a wonderful barrel. The noise was hushed instantly, and the throbbing of the drums died away.

Like a sheep before the slaughter or a man before he is lynched, this first victim of the horrible feast stood calm and silent. The flames of the fire played on his face, which bore no sign of any emotion in any shape or form.

The air was tense as the two butchers came up on each side of the man. They seemed small and insignificant beside the man they were to kill.

The little man all covered with mud took out from his fur bag a sharp-edged knife. The two butchers got hold of the victim's arms, but he never moved.

The little man all covered with mud raised his hand holding the keen-edged knife and placed it on the big man's throat. Then for three heart-beats there was a terrible silence; even the fire did not crackle or spit. . . .

There was a sudden hoarse sound coming from the victim's slit throat. Blood spattered and flew in all directions and made the fire hiss when it hit the flames.

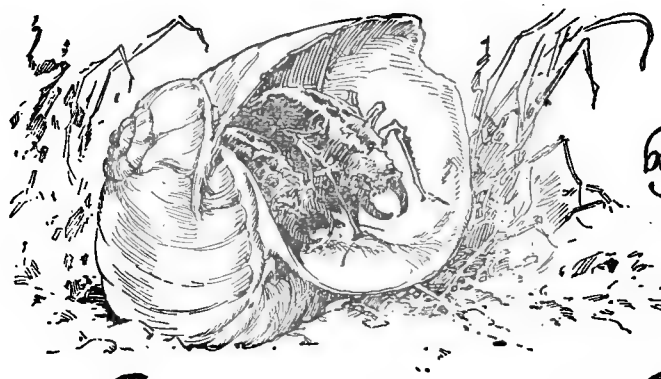
The victim struggled and fought and almost broke the hold of the two butchers. The crowd came out of its spell with blood-curdling yells.

A dozen hands reached out and wrenched the head off the shoulders. The body was let to the ground, and a mad scramble for different portions of it began. There was the flashing and clashing of knives. In a few moments a gory mess was all that there was to show where a man had been.

LATE that night when all the feasting had been done and every one had gorged to his capacity Um Keso's youngest child, a mere tot who was just at the teething age, lay asleep beside its father. Um Keso had given it a bone in order to help its teeth to come through. The child had gnawed at it until it fell asleep and still retained the bone in its pudgy little hands.

Had any one chanced to examine that bone they would have found that it was the elbow-bone of another child.

Digitized by Google



by F. St. Mars

Arms and the Beetle

Author of "The Outcast," "Amigo del Christiano, etc.

THE Bombardier? Not Billy of the mighty fist.

Yes, but where, in all that waste of tumbled sand and waving plumes of grooved porcupine-quill grass was one to find him?

The marrem and the sea lyme grass were everywhere. They dominated the dreary desolation of the sand-dunes. When the wind dusted myriads of finest particles into smooth slopes, the tips of the swaying grasses drew strange patterns upon it. Their hair-like roots packed the sand between. Still everything was ever shifting, ever changing, sand-hill and hollow, smooth level, and drifted slope. Only the grass remained the same, whispering in the sea breeze, a thin, glaucous-tinted forest everywhere alike.

How find the Bombardier in *that?*

Yet, throbbing with life, the sand-dunes are. Perchance some one may point the way.

A tiny black hole—it looked as if it might have been the drilling of a worm—suddenly vanished. Closer inspection showed that it had been plugged by the body of a little sand-colored spider about to sally forth into the briny. Like Br'er Rabbit, however, he squatted motionless at the mouth of his mine-shaft first, to see whom he could kill or who could kill him.

You could have seen his eyes gleaming too—fiery as a tiger's. Moreover it was with all a tiger's swift, sinister stealth that he presently came forth, and stalked a pebble lying between a clump of frosted-leaved sea-holly and a yellow-horned sea-poppy. But men had christened this the spider wolf, not tiger.

There were a dozen duplicates of him owning a dozen duplicate burrows within a yard or two. But for us he only matters. He was showing us the way.

Arrived in the tiny shadow cast by the stone, the spider—jumped. He jumped again. Then, quick as—well, as a spider can be, he darted under.

Bang!—Bang!

There it was again, a distinct report!

From under a stone it came—from under a small stone. Moreover, there was the thin pungent bluish vapor of each discharge blowing away. Somebody—somebody very small indeed seemed to have *fired* at the wolf under the stone. But who? Who could it be to fire a gun in that strange place, and of that size—to fire off a gun under a small stone? Who, indeed, but our Bombardier?

Then the spider came out. He had a somewhat dazed and worried look, and he walked as one partially—partially—gassed!

Gassed it was though, and severely. The wolf had been fired at and hit with a gas shell, and it hurt as well as smelled. Who could have hit him? Who but our Bombardier. And the gun and the gas shells he used? The same had been in use by his fathers for a thousand, thousand years.

The spider hurried home again to his own little, tight little burrow, dazed, amazed, bemazed, but nevertheless the more quickly perhaps, because a toad with the

Digitized by Google

walk of a mouse instead of the super-deliberate gait of a toad, plus a yellow line down his back, which, together, made him a toad called a natterjack, came out of a hole of his own—under a dewberry bush, it was—and very nearly gobbled him up.

But the toad in his turn hurried back indoors because of the shadow of a bird, an ordinary common or garden song thrush, in fact—oddly out of place in that scene somehow—who came flying low across the bents straight to the big pebble, and settled thereon.

Then it was, one might have seen that the bird held a snail in his beak—a wood-snail, and that he had flown to that stone because it was his "anvil"—stones of size being rare thereabouts—used as such for hammering to pieces his shelly *table d'hôte*. The litter of shell fragments, belonging to lately deceased but unlamented snails of choice varieties after their slimy kind, all about, proved these little facts.

Now that hair-weight fighter, the wolf-spider, had pointed out to us the wigwam of the Bombardier, the thrush explained the reason why it should be just precisely there. That is to say, Bombardier was a snail-eater, too. Not all the snails brought to this "anvil" were slain by the thrush. Some, perhaps, were too hard, or too small, or the wrong sort, or something. Anyway, a few, a very few had lived, and, in time began to crawl away. The Bombardier was there to see that they did not.

The *tap-tap-tap-tap* that represented the snail's outworks being scientifically hammered to fragments in the thrush's beak against the stone—it sounded a wonderful long way on the silent sand-hills—seemed to wake the Bombardier up. It was almost as if he knew what it meant. Anyway, he ran out very quickly, stopped at sight of the bird perched giant-wise three inches above his head, and still more quickly ran back again.

There was just time to see that the Bombardier was a beetle, a quite small beetle, only ten millimeters long, with a narrow insinuating sort of a head and fore-body, painted red; a torpedo-shaped dusky hind-body covered with blue-black armored wing-shields; and six legs, painted red also. Except, therefore, that his war-paint was soldierly, the Bombardier appeared to be a person of no importance at all.

But he was.

At that moment a weasel, all forest Autumn brown and spotless shirt-front, popped out of one rabbit's-hole and into another. Instantly a subterranean explosion occurred, and out tumbled a weasel and—not by any means a rabbit, but a great big, white, black, and chestnut *duck;* a shelduck, who of all choices, nested in such peculiar sites as rabbit burrows.

The commotion so startled the thrush that he dropped his snail and flew one way, while the shelduck flew the other, and the sand-hills were left again to the peace of the afternoon sun, the grand long dirge of the tide, the ping of the hovering flies, the whisper of the wind in the stiff grasses, and the tired drone of the golden-tipped bees.

And it was then, after an interval, that the snail—it was only a minor affair—and the Bombardier came out together. Seeing the latter, the former retired with haste, and the Bombardier proceeded to inspect.

Tap-tap-tap, he went all over that pretty spiral house with his antennæ, his feelers, which were magic wands possessing a mysterious extra sense that appeared to be most of the other senses rolled into one, and something extra. The Bombardier seemed to be about to submit a contract in regard to that shell, or to buy it. Never, surely, was a mere snail's-shell subjected to so minute an examination. And in the end, the Bombardier tried to get inside.

Apparently that was where his narrow head came in, for the door was shut, as it were, but his razor-edged jaws got it ajar, and once so, he never let go.

Snail shells, however, are hermit built, made for one, not two, and the silent struggle that ensued—the snail to keep his door closed, the beetle to get it open—was quite exciting.

Unfortunately, in the middle of it all, the wolf spider—or another—came back. His brain—if he had one—was apparently large enough to tell him that now was a chance, as it were, to catch the Bombardier bending, but not large enough to tell him to begin at the right end. He chose the rear. With almost any other creature this, for a surprize attack, would have been the correct spot, but the Bombardier was—he was the Bombardier. His aim was unerring, and—*bang!*

It caught the spider in mid-spring, a beautiful shot.

You could hear it. You could see it—as

Digitized by Google

a little cloud of bluish smoke. You could have smelled it, if you had been fool enough to risk your proboscis so very close. And apparently you, or rather the spider, could feel it. Anyway, he rolled over, and curled up his eight legs as if dead; and the Bombardier turned round to rush him and complete the killing with his little, but very adequate jaws, but had to turn about again to meet the attack of not one spider, but five.

They were all wolf spiders, all sand-colored, all bobbed up like Jacks-in-the-box out of bolt-hole in the sand, and were all apparently afflicted with eating diabetes. And of course they fought like Dervishes. Spiders always do that, once they have made up their crawly minds—it is one of the strong points of the demon tribe.

But the Bombardier! The little soldier Bombardier fought a rear-guard action like an Anzac brigade, retreating slowly the while to his stone fortress, with his tail, not his face, to the foe.

It is a maxim of war that a retreating army, like a scorpion, should carry its sting in its tail. This certainly did the Bombardier, though he had no tail. But a sort of torpedo-tube arrangement in the latter end of his cylindrical body was just as good. From it he fired his hosts—discharges of fluid which sort of exploded on contact with the air, going off in a blue "smoke" with a distinct report, and smelling rather like nitric acid.

Bang! he went; and *Bang! Bang!* The smoke from his "cannon" showed plainly on the air.

The spiders jumped quick as flickering sparks, darting in and out; and quick and quicker to dare. But quick, too, was the Bombardier in his shooting, and quicker and quicker to fire. Any one spider who once received that mimic discharge in the face did not come back and ask for more.

Bang! Bang! The bolder spirits got it worst. *Bang! Bang!* That "pip-squeak" mowed a road. *Bang!*

Eight times in all he fired, and lo!—the Bombardier was nowhere at all. He had gained and ducked under the stone, and there as many spiders as chose might come at him if they dared.

They did not dare. They went away instead. And the Bombardier went to sleep.

Deep peace brooded over the sand-dunes, above the sea, and along the golden shore. Nobody slew anybody else—for a bit—and a lark rose as if to offer up a hymn for the wondrous phenomenon.

Then came the schoolboy. He sat down beside the thrush's "anvil," and half-idly began to collect some of the shells that had escaped their appointed fate. They were "doing" mollusca in the Natural History class at school that term; and a wonderful discoverer of many rare forms is the song thrush. Because he was a boy, the boy turned over the stone, revealing, of course, that greatly surprized and gaily uniformed soldier, the Bombardier.

The fort, which the Bombardier had hitherto deemed about as movable as St. Paul's, lifted bodily off atop of him; semi-dark changed in a flash to blinding glare; security transformed in a breath to gigantic danger, it is no wonder the Bomdardier ran for it.

But whither?

Should it be under the nearest grass-root? A bronze and brutal lizard lived there. Should it be a dash across the open? The micro-dimo sand-colored wolf spiders honeycombed the place with their pitfalls there. Should it be under the yellow-horned poppy? A nest of red-hot cannibal ants lived there. The sea-holly then? But there that objectionally agile toad. Beneath the root of the silver-leafed sea-sallow? Beware the pigmy shrew-mouse, Britain's smallest mammal, with eyes like beads, and teeth like red glass.

Whither then? How could a poor Bombardier tell? Here. No, there. Nay, but under here. Dash! It was a hand of the boy. This way. That way. Quick! Boy's fingers were coming. Oh, anywhere! Horror! Nowhere to escape—nothing but blinding, indifferent sun, lurking hidden foes everywhere, and the open pursuer.

Dodge? The Bombardier could have given professional footballers kinks in the next thirty seconds. Then, the fingers of the boy shut down—shutting, shutting, shutting (it was all up) shu——!

Bang!

The boy started.

Bang! Bang! And again, *Bang!*

The Bombardier was running now, in real earnest, firing hard astern as he ran, and although the fingers of the amazed boy followed, grabbing, I guess they grabbed short on purpose every time. Then the boy examined his finger-tips. They burned a

Digitized by Google

little. Then he glared. They became stained with red. Then—well, then he got up and went away.

He was not afraid—now that the retreating Bombardier had sounded the "cease fire," so to speak. Oh no!—he was not afraid, that lad, but he was suddenly anxious—for the first time in his life perhaps—to wash his hands. How could he tell what that burning red stain might turn into? Anything was possible from an artillery beetle, a beetle that used firearms—anything, he argued. Even poison. Who knew?

He began to run.

With no stone fort to retreat to, the Bombardier was in a bad case for a bit—among the birds. It was a running skylark first who jabbed, but he fired, and she did not seem to like the taste of his poison gas on her beak, and went away. It was a rock pipit, like a lark to the casual, who ran a tilt at him, and was "shot" pointblank for his pains, and also withdrew. Then it was a big hunting beetle, all black and gold and purple reflections on his armor, like burnt metal.

This beetle was a hard case, not given to spare anything alive in the insect line very much, but he shied off at the psychological moment when he recognized the Bombardier's striking black and red livery. And in doing so, drew attention to the fact that that was apparently what it was there for, that Guard's uniform, to draw attention, to advertise that the Bombardier was really the Bombardier, with the arms of a bombardier, and that he was not merely just a common good-to-eat kind of beetle.

By the time the Bombardier had found a "dug-out" in the root of a labyrinth beneath a clump of sea barley, the sad dusk had drawn her damp, gray wings over the tired earth. The drone of the tide had changed and risen an octave. There was a new meaning in the song of the wind among the grass, and the sea was changing, by way of gold, port-wine, and ruby, to "battleship-gray" and to "destroyer black."

The gulls were passing seaward with wild sea cries, and white powder-puffs—which were the visible tails of invisible rabbits—were beginning to come out and play with the growing shadows.

Presently the still, calm regard of the moon, shining down upon all things, awakened the Bombardier from his open-eyed slumbers—if a creature unable to shut its eyes may be said to slumber—and, after polishing his armor and cleaning his "gun," sallied forth.

The cool wind, that never, never goes to sleep on sand-hills, dusted fine particles of sand everywhere into ever-changing figures and shapes. The grass-tussocks looked like rabbits, and the rabbits like grass-tussocks. Everywhere the moon had bewitched the scene, and the spell of night lay heavy over all.

The Bombardier had no wish to wander in this beautiful picture, but he had three pressing needs. Firstly he would not have the bronze or green lizards find him anywhere else than under a stone when the sun had warmed them to life. Second, his "inner beetle" told him that a snail was imperative. Third, and this was rather wonderful, there was a scent coming downwind which he felt he really must investigate—the scent of Bombardier beetle.

Now, like most beetles, to look at, in his ordinary or "ground trim," the Bombardier appeared as if he were just tight-fitting armor encased and quite wingless. He now proceeded, as it were, to split apart the lower two armor plates on his back—like shelling a pea—and one then saw that these were but covers protecting the wondrously folded wings beneath. Then, having shaken out these same wings the Bombardier rose gaily into the moonlight and flew away.

It was not the finest sort of flight, far from it, but he got along. There was speed in the proposition, if rather uncertain steering; his wings were good enough to get him there, or thereabouts, anyway.

That a nightjar, something owl-like, something swift-like, should aim for him and miss by the length of one of the hairs upon its own beak, as it whisked by, was of course not in the program. Nor did he relish the attentions of a flickering twisting bat—a noctule bat, by the way.

Such things were disconcerting, especially as, at the best of times, he needed all his wits to steer with, same being distinctly "wild" at high speeds. The result was that in the end he collided, head first and with considerable "way on," with the flag-post of No. 7 hole on the golf links, and fell to the ground, there to whirl like a top, smitten apparently with concussion.

He had accomplished his aims, however. He had followed up the scent of the other

Digitized by Google

Bombardier beetle to its—logical conclusion. Indeed that "logical conclusion," in the shape of a little female Bombardier beetle, frightened out of her wits, and firing at this strange apparition which came from nowhere and whirled furiously, was there to prove it. She had come out on to the green to find snails. They liked the damp green short grass after the hose had done its work.

The only difficulty was that she had tackled a snail some sizes too large for her. The snail had shut his front-door, so to speak, and had shut her foot in with it. In this unenviable position—though doubtless she could have given that snail socks in time—she discovered herself face to face with a big black spider that must have stepped straight out of somebody's nightmare. I do not know the precise name of that horror, nor want to. The thing itself was enough. And its eyes shone all afire in the moonlight

The trapped beetle gave herself up for lost, and feigned death.

The spider approached with the care of a leopard.

And—Bombardier fell from the clouds.

B-r-rrr-r-rrr! he went, revolving at incredible speed, and everything jumped.

Brrr-r-rr-rrr! he continued, and the spider—it was a monster indeed—got back nerve enough to creep round the whirligig, with the thrice refined caution of a cat.

Brr-rrr-rrr-r-r-rrrr!

The Bombardier was spinning all over the place, and so nearly spun headlong into the spider that she tapped him with one of her front-legs—used as feelers—as she jumped backwards.

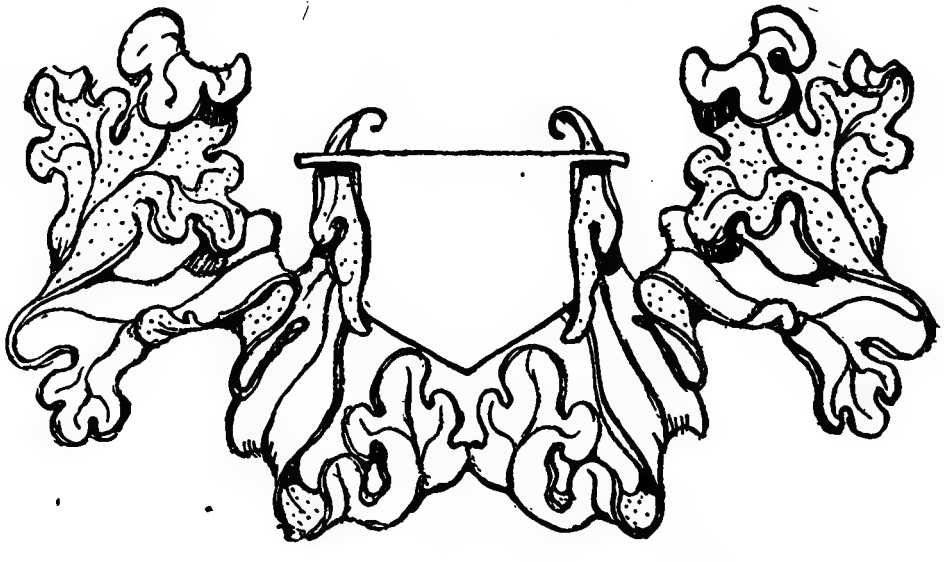
The effect was magical.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Brr-rrr-rr! Bang! Bang! went the Bombardier in a perfect catherine wheel of commotion, still whirling.

And, instantly—as if the concussions of his fire had touched off her detonators, so to speak, which in a way, they had—*Bang! Bang! Bang!* bombarded the little female beetle also.

The enormous spider was exactly between the two, and—she got it! She got it fair and square. There never was so amazed and acrobatic a spider before. For three brief seconds there were glimpses of long legs and hairy body leaping about madly in the burning acrid, blinding fumes. For three seconds that spider danced as assuredly spider never danced before. It was a mad can-can, a crazy skipping display. Then—there was no spider. The calamity had gone, running like a grayhound on a non-stop spin, away and away into the wind and the night.

The wayward moon ducked behind a cloud-bank soon after that, but the last living things it showed upon No. 7 green, was the Bombardier forcing the front-door of the snail by a steady sawing of his efficient, scissor-like jaws, and letting the female beetle out.



Digitized by Google

THE GO-GITTER

by Stephen M Walmsley

THE road was fetlock deep with white dust which boiled up from the burros' tiny hoofs and all but obscured the woman who sat hunched forward on the springless seat of the rickety wagon. The burros—eight of them and all but the wheel pair hitched by individual traces—moved at a snail's pace. The mid-forenoon sun was a flaming disk of burnished brass. Just ahead lay the desert town of Colter.

Slowly the weatherbeaten conveyance dragged its way past the sun-blistered railroad station with its dripping water-tank, past the dingy general store and the tiny post-office, fronted by a much gnawed hitching-rail, and on toward the end of the street. It halted at last before a small, unpainted shack. The burros dropped asleep, their noses almost in the dust, their long ears drooping. The woman climbed wearily to the ground.

She was raw-boned and stoop-shouldered. The fine white dust covered her from head to foot so that her calico dress, her heavy shoes and her faded sombrero seemed to have been made from the same material. Her faded blue eyes looked out from beneath her dust-powdered eyebrows as from a mask. She untied the heavy, cotton handkerchief from her neck and wiped her face, then walked, a little unsteadily, toward the door of the shack.

At the sound of her knock on the warped door-frame, a man, past middle age, appeared in the doorway.

"Waal, if it ain't Miz Tatum!" he exclaimed. "Come in an' set down. You're a long ways from home, ain't ye?"

The woman entered the house and slumped into a chair, her gnarled hands clenched in her lap.

"They—they got my boy, Draw! My little Jake," she said hoarsely.

"What's that? Whadya say, Miz Tatum? Who's *they?*" exploded the old man.

"Mexicans!" said the woman, her hopeless eyes staring straight ahead.

The man's hands clenched until the knuckles showed white through the tan and he took a half-step forward.

"They didn't—they didn't—?" he half-whispered.

The woman shook her head.

"No, leastways I didn't see 'em. But they took 'im off with 'em, an' I reckin they might as well killed him fust as last."

Her eyes brimmed over with tears that left grotesque streaks on her grimy cheeks.

The man relaxed and seated himself.

"Tell me how it happened. We gotta do somethin' 'bout this."

The woman straightened herself in her chair.

"It was yistiday morning. You know there ain't been nobody on the ranch but Jake an' me since my ol' man died nearly three years back. Jest Jake an' me. Jake's only fifteen, but he's a right good boy, a mighty good boy. I reckon I ain't never goin' tuh be able to get along 'thout him. We was eatin' brekfust when them Mexicans rode up, 'bout a dozen of 'em, an' they was right in the house 'fore we knowed it.

Digitized by Google

I do' know what they expected tuh find, fer goodness knows we ain't got nothin', but they searched all over the place an' was awful mad when they didn't find nothin' much. They took all the food they was an' my two hosses and then grabbed Jake an' said they was goin' tuh take him too.

"We fit 'em best we could, but it wa'n't no use. They was too many of 'em. They tied Jake to one of our hosses an' said they'd bring him back if I'd get 'em a thousan' dollars." She paused a moment. "A thousan' dollars! I ain't never seed a thousan' dollars. I was tuh bring it to the crossin' at the foot o' Lobo Cañon. They said they'd be watchin' for me an' that I should come alone. They'll give me two weeks tuh get the money. Then they lit out. I ketched up some burros an' been travelin' ever since."

She ceased speaking and rubbed her eyes with a misshapen knuckle.

The man's blue eyes had turned to a cold gray, and he tugged at the ends of his ragged mustache.

"So they took little Jake," he said, half to himself. "I kin remember how sot up his daddy was when the little fellow was born."

He straightened himself with a jerk and reached for his high-crowned hat which hung on a nail beside the door.

"But don't you worry, Miz Tatum. We'll get that boy back. You go up tuh Miz Henderson's. She'll look after ye. Jest you wait 'round 'til you hear from me. I gotta be stirrin' about."

He stamped out of the house and up the street toward the center of the town, his bandy legs doing their best at the unaccustomed task of rapid walking.

Next to the post-office stood a tiny building over the door of which hung a faded sign —U. S. Customs. The old man entered. At a wooden table sat big Crandall the river-guard, laboriously filling out a report blank. He looked up as Draw entered.

"Howdy Draw," he said. "Set down until I get this wrote."

The old man remained standing.

"Let that —— paper be! I got somethin' *important* tuh say."

Crandall raised his eyes inquiringly.

"A bunch o' low-down greasers run off with Miz Tatum's boy, Jake, an' air holdin' 'im fer a thousan' dollars' ransom. The ol' lady come tuh my place jest now an' tol' me about it. I'm goin' tuh git that boy back er know the reason why!"

"I'm with yuh," said Crandall. "An' so's ever'body in town. We'll form a posse an' git after 'em."

The old man raised his hand.

"No, son, I'm handlin' this myse'f. It wouldn't do no good to go at it that-a-way. Them skunks 've got the boy 'cross the river 'fore now an' they'll be watchin' the crossin's. If we was all tuh go after him they'd know it in no time. Then they'd take the boy an' go south. If we got tuh pushin' 'em too hard they'd stick a knife in 'im an' scatter.

"I reckin you're right," said Crandall. "Mebbe I'd better go down to the depot an' send a telegram to my chief at El Paso. He kin git the State Department tuh stir up the Mexican Government about it."

The old man grinned.

"No, that won't do, neither. I reckin Miz Tatum wants her boy back 'fore he's gray-headed. Now you listen tuh me. I'm goin' after that boy an' I'm goin' *alone*. Them greasers have allowed two weeks fer rasin' the money. If I ain't back in ten days, you go 'round among the boys an' git the money. You won't have no trouble. Give it tuh Miz Tatum an' see that she gits her boy. After that, if I ain't turned up an' any you boys feels like findin' out what's become of me, jest go to it. But what I wantta know now is, who stole that boy? I don't think Miz Tatum knows, leastways she didn't say nothin' 'bout it. I hain't bin down on the river much the last few years since my rheumatiz begin botherin' me, an' I've kinda lost track of who's workin' through that country. But you oughta know."

Crandall sat silent for a moment.

"They's two or three gangs down there that mighta done the job, but it probably was ol' Ramon Torilla. He's the worst of the lot an' about the only one that's got the guts tuh come as far north of the river as Miz Tatum's place."

"Ramon Torilla!" said Draw. "Is that ol' houn'-dawg still a-kickin'? Why I knowed him ten years ago. I'd be mighty proud tuh meet up with him. I've run him ragged many a time."

"O' course I cain't be sure," said Crandall. "You'd better drop by an' see Joe Haines. He's got a place on the river 'bout ten miles above Dos Vacas an' he knows

Digitized by Google

purty much what goes on along the river."

"I'll do that an' I guess I'd better be movin'. If I travel right smart I kin reach the river by tomorrer night. Don't say nothing 'bout my goin'."

Crandall rose from his chair and held out his hand.

"Good luck tuh ye, Draw, I sure hate tuh see yuh startin' off by yourse'f, but I guess you've got the right idee an' if any one can do the job it's you. You allus was a go-gitter. An' jest remember this, if it'll do yuh any good: If anythin' happens tuh you, there'll be dead greasers strung from —— tuh breakfast."

Draw shook the outstretched hand and then hurried out. He stopped for a moment to speak to Mrs. Henderson and then returned to his shack. He filled his worn saddle-bags with rations and his canteen with water. Then he rolled his frying-pan and coffee-pot in his slicker and tied it behind his saddle, strapped on his heavy pistol-belt and locked up the house. In fifteen minutes he had saddled his pony and was away, southward.

HE TRAVELED rapidly, and it was not yet dark when he reached the deserted Tatum ranch-house. It was a dreary place, built of 'dobe mud and mesquite poles, but there was a half-filled water-tank and some hay in the stable.

At daybreak next morning he saddled up and started away on the trail of the Mexicans, which was still plainly visible. He followed it until mid-afternoon, then, as it was evident that the gang had made for the crossing at the foot of Lobo Cañon he turned eastward—heading for the Haines ranch-house which stood on the bank of the Rio Grande. As he rode, he scanned the country closely, re-establishing in his mind the landmarks which had once been so familiar. It was evening when he reached the ranch. Haines, who was feeding his horses, greeted him with a shout.

"Waal, if it ain't Draw White. You ain't been down this-a-way for a mighty long time. Git down! I'll have one of the boys take keer of your hoss. Felipe! *Aqui!*"

An old Mexican appeared around the corner of the corral. Draw dismounted.

"Tell the boy to ease the cinchas a mite an' give 'im a little corn if you got it tuh spare. I wantta talk tuh yuh a minute an' then I gotta be movin'."

The Mexican took the pony, and the two men walked toward the ranch-house. Draw told his story.

"I reckon Crandall's right," said Haines when Draw had finished. "Ol' Torilla's bin right busy lately. Let's ask Felipe. He's a good *hombre* an' ain't got no more use fer Torilla 'n we have."

They called the Mexican and the three spoke together in Spanish for some time.

"You say Torilla crossed at the Lobo crossin' night 'fore last," said Draw.

The Mexican nodded violently.

"*Si, señor!* That is true!"

"And where does Torilla live when he's at home?"

The Mexican shrugged his shoulders.

"Who knows, *señor?* That is hard to say. Perhaps he is at Hermosa. That is on the hills beyond the river, fifteen miles from here."

Draw nodded.

"Yes, I remember the place."

"If he is there he will be in the big house in the center of the village. It belonged before to my uncle, Esteban Reyes, but he and Torilla have fought, and now my uncle is dead."

Felipe crossed himself as he spoke.

"I'll take a chance on it anyway," said Draw.

The two men entered the house and ate a hasty supper.

"If I remember rightly," said Draw when he had finished his meal, the's a crossin' 'bout two, three miles above here, that's all right when the water ain't too high."

Haines nodded.

"I reckin you ain't fergot much about this country, Draw. I don't guess the's half a dozen men knows that place. How'd yuh ever find out about it?"

"Waal, I've worked this country purty thor'ly durin' the past forty years. I don't guess the's many places here 'bouts that I ain't been at, one time er 'nother. But I gotta be movin'. Its gettin mighty dark already."

"Don'tcha want me tuh ride with yuh fer's the crossin?"

"Much obleeged, Jack, but I kin find it all right. Ain't no use of your troublin' yourse'f."

He mounted his horse, which Felipe had brought, and rode away up-river. It was very dark, and the pony picked its way carefully through the mesquite. As he rode,

Digitized by Google

Draw's mind was busy recreating the surroundings through which he was traveling. From time to time he stopped and peered about in the darkness. Even though he could see but a few feet before him the place was beginning to feel familiar. After riding for nearly an hour he dismounted and led his pony to the water's edge. The wandering channel of the muddy stream had wrought many changes, but at last he found the place he was seeking. He remounted and rode his pony into the water. The animal set its fore feet down gingerly and snorted, but Draw urged him forward. The water rose to the pony's belly and Draw pulled his rifle from its scabbard and held it over his shoulder. But he had made no mistake, and in a few minutes the pony scrambled safely up the opposite bank.

Beyond the river lay an open flat, a mile or two wide, and then the banks of the valley rose steeply to the uplands. Draw headed straight south until he was sure that he was in rear of any one who might be watching the Lobo crossing and then turned west toward the trail leading to Hermosa. He came on it just at the foot of the hills and headed his pony up the slope. It was a long, hard climb, and the night was well-advanced before he topped the ridge and saw the scattered lights of Hermosa to the southward. He dismounted for a moment to let his pony blow, and then pushed on.

As he rode, he sought in his mind for a plan of action. He decided to go direct to Torilla's house and trust to luck and the darkness to carry him through. A single horseman, who might easily pass for a Mexican, would attract little attention.

In half an hour he reached the outskirts of the group of squalid huts. He did not stop, but rode straight into their midst. A few dogs set up a half-hearted barking and dim figures appeared in half-lighted doorways, but no one challenged him. One of the houses, poor as it was, was plainly larger than the others. Before it dozed a saddled pony. Draw dismounted and threw the reins over his pony's head. Then, as quietly as he could, he walked to the open door and entered.

IN THE far corner of the room Ramon Torilla sat at a small table playing solitaire. His hands lay on the greasy cards spread out before him. From the ceiling hung a small, smoky lamp. He did not hear Draw enter. The old man stood motionless for a moment until his eyes became better accustomed to the light and then stepped quickly to the center of the room. Torilla looked up at the sound of his footsteps, and his hands moved convulsively toward his body.

"Jest keep yore hands where they be, Ramon!" snapped Draw.

His revolver was still in its holster, but there was something in his voice that made the movement cease.

"Guess you don't remember me, Ramon. It's a long time sence we met up last. My name's White; Draw White they call me."

"*Si, señor,* I remember," answered the Mexican, his black eyes shifting like those of a cornered animal. "I am please to see you again."

"That's a lie, but we'll let it go," said Draw. He spoke in English, for although he was familiar with the Mexican tongue, he was not willing to give even the slightest advantage to the man opposite him. "I come down to get that boy you run off with a coupla days ago."

The Mexican's face was expressionless, but there was an almost imperceptible tightening of his fingers. Draw caught the movement and knew he had found his man.

"I no *sabe* what boy you spik of."

"That's onlucky fer you, 'cause you ain't goin' tuh have but a mighty short time tuh find him. I want that boy an' you're goin' tuh get him fer me."

"S'pose I no get 'im? S'pose I holler, I call my men!"

The Mexican's lips drew back in a narrow grin.

Draw's right shoulder lifted slightly and his long-barreled .45 stared the Mexican in the face.

"But you ain't *goin'* tuh holler. Now let's talk turkey. If you make a row or even *look* like you're goin' to start an' thing, I'll drill yuh, *pronto.* You ain't gotta chance, not a chance. No matter how many *hombres* you've got 'round here, I've allus got a fightin' chance, but with you its different. You're done for, 'fore yuh even start. Now jest think that over!"

The Mexican's eyes wavered. He was afraid. Draw saw the look. He had seen it many times before, sometimes even behind a gun which already covered him. But he had never guessed wrong. No one guesses wrong but once. He watched the

Digitized by Google

Mexican's eyes as a trainer watches those of his giant cats. Twice he saw the man's glance dart toward a ragged blanket which hung against the wall and as quickly shift away. Then he saw him look toward the door, his eyes lighting. Like a flash, the old man lurched to one side and whirled toward the door. The room was filled with a double roar. A heavy bullet whizzed by Draw's head and buried itself in the adobe wall. In the doorway a figure clutched at the empty air and crumpled in a heap. Before the sound died, Draw was facing Torilla.

"Come out o' here, *pronto!* If you ain't aboard that hoss o' yourn 'fore I am, you'll never git thar."

Torilla, the fear of death upon him, sprang from the table and raced toward his pony, Draw at his heels. The two men swung into their saddles.

"Git outa town!" said Draw and gave the Mexican's pony a kick in the ribs.

The animal sprang forward, and the two men raced, side by side into the darkness.

Already, the chase was forming. From all about came the sound of shouts and running feet. A quarter of a mile beyond the village, Draw ordered a halt, then turned the ponies off the trail and headed them, on a wide detour, back toward the village. They had hardly traveled more than two hundred yards when they heard the Mexicans thunder by in the darkness.

In a few moments they had reached the rear of Torilla's house. From the road in front, came the chatter of high-pitched women's voices, but the house itself was deserted. Draw pushed the Mexican in ahead of him. Without a word he stepped to the blanket which hung on the wall and jerked it away. Behind it was a low door, hardly three feet high, locked with a heavy padlock.

"Open that door!" he said to Torilla, prodding him with the muzzle of his revolver. The Mexican drew a key from his pocket and fitted it to the lock with trembling hands, then pulled the door open.

Draw stooped beside the narrow opening.

"Jake!" he called. "Jake! Come on out! Its Draw, Draw White!"

"I'm comin'. I'm comin'," came a voice, and the boy crawled out, blinking in the light, his clothes and face covered with dust and filth.

Draw turned on the Mexican, his voice, choked with rage.

"—— yore greasy hide, ain't ye satisfied with stealin' the boy 'thout shettin' him up in a dog-kennel? An' lemme tell yuh this! Next time yo' got an'thin' hid, learn tuh keep yo' eyes off'n where its at."

He turned to the boy,

"C'mon, Jake, we gotta be movin' 'fore that gang gits back. Yo' maw's mighty anxious tuh see yuh. We'll take this greaser and drop 'im over the hill whar he can't find his way home fore mornin' and then we'll be gittin' back 'cross the river."

Digitized by Google

THE BEACH-COMBER

by W Townend

Author of "Paddy Burnbrook's Wig," "The Codfish," etc.

FROM the corner of the West India Dock nearest the main gate—the gate that has the little three-masted sailing-vessel over the arch—I saw through the rain and mist the gray bulk of the S. S. *Hyacinth*, discharging cargo. I made my way quickly, through pools of water, along the quayside, past the open sliding doors of the transit shed and the huge hydraulic cranes, swinging down bales of cargo from the hatches to the waiting cargomen, and climbed the ladder leading to the after deck.

The third mate leaned over the rail amidships.

"Could you tell me," I said, "if the chief engineer is on board?"

"You'll find him in his berth," said the third mate, "through the alleyway yonder."

I knocked at the door, and a voice called—

"Come in!"

Mr. Harrington, who was seated at his desk, reading a book, turned his head as I entered. He stared at me for a moment, as though perplexed, and then rose to his feet with a yell.

"You!" he said. "Well, I'm ——!"

He caught hold of my hand and laughed.

"I might have known it! You read we were back again, eh!"

"Yes," I said, "this morning. How's life?"

"Middlin' to moderately good," said Mr. Harrington. "Time hangs as heavy as lead. The old man's learnin' the flute. A sore subject this past voyage. Take off your coat, son, an' sit down."

I glanced at the books on the open flap of his desk. One dealt with the care of cattle; another with up-to-date methods of dairy management; another with the economies of the farm; the fourth was a treatise on egg production and the feeding of hens.

"Do you mean to say," I said, "that you're still pining for a life of ease in the country? Or what?"

Mr. Harrington seated himself once more in his swivel chair and lighted his pipe.

"Dunno about a life of ease," he said. "But I've theories on the milk-producin' capacities of cross-breed cows that would revolutionize the industry, if I could get 'em put into practise. Farmin' in this country is in an awful state. If I ran the *Hyacinth's* engines in the huggermugger way farmers run their farms, Lord, we'd be laid up ten months out of the twelve!"

"Seems to me," I said, "you'll leave the sea and buy that farm of yours yet."

An excellent and old-established joke between Mr. Harrington and myself. He smiled. He nodded his head. He took a couple of pulls at his pipe. Then he spoke with a seriousness that surprized me.

"Costs money," he said. "I'd like to. Can I? That's the problem that's worryin' me. I tell you, I'm tired of the sea; —— tired!"

Digitized by Google

This was terrible.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because," said Mr. Harrington morosely, "it's too dull. The monotony's just about wearin' me out. Nothin' to see or do. Give me a farm! Things growin'. Cows an' sheep an' chickens. Lord, life would be worth livin'!"

I marveled.

We talked for a while and then we sat and smiled at each other without speaking and again I felt that Mr. Harrington had changed very little since I had first met him, years before, second engineer on a West Hartlepool tramp steamer, on a Black Sea voyage. It would have been difficult to realize that we were not back on board the old *Umballa* but for the gray in his hair and the lines in his brown, clean-shaven face, and a curious melancholy in his gray eyes; and he no longer wore an oil-stained suit of dungaree, a sweat rag knotted about his neck, broken shoes, and a peaked cap without a badge, but a chief engineer's uniform of black broadcloth, with gilt buttons and the four gold bands on the sleeve, and two medal ribbons; also, the chief engineer's room on the *Hyacinth*, lighted by green-shaded electric lights, warmed by steam pipes, with white-painted walls and green curtains on brass rods, and a polished mahogany bunk and a chest of drawers and a desk and carpeted floor, was very different from the second engineer's cold and wet little berth on board the *Umballa*.

A steward brought in a tray with cups of tea and pieces of buttered toast. The door closed softly. Mr. Harrington's thin lips twisted in his curious, lop-sided smile and he gave a chuckle. What I had thought, he had been thinking, too.

"Yes, it's queer how things have worked out," he said, "isn't it? One minute, second engineer on an old, worn-out, hard-up, undermanned, worm-eaten, leakin' tin coffin, with no prospects in view except goin' quick in a Western Ocean gale, an' then, just when I'm wonderin' whether it wouldn't be just as easy to drop over the side an' make a hole in the water an' end it, everything's changed. An' now I'm chief engineer on a packet like this, four forty feet long, ten thousand tons dead weight, sea speed thirteen knots, four-cylinder, quadruple-expansion engines, three single-ended multitubular boilers, four furnaces in each, steam pressure two twenty pounds the square inch, horse-power three thousand two hundred, all pumps fitted in duplicate, an' Lord knows what else, with three engineers under me, an' my indents passed without so much as a kick from any one!

"Yes, son, what I need I must have. I suppose if a man must go to sea he couldn't have things made more comfortable than I have here on the *Hyacinth!*"

And then I asked the question that I had wanted to ask for years.

"You never told me yet how it happened. How did it come about? What was it?"

Mr. Harrington eyed me for a moment in silence.

"Luck," he said, "that's all. You don't believe it, do you? It's the truth. They always put the blame on me for the *Nagasaki* sinkin', as you know. I was chief engineer. Who else could it have been who fixed things? It wasn't till the feller responsible was dyin' an' frightened of goin' to hell that he told the truth. Funny business! I can't get the hang of it even now!

"The insurance, though, had nothin' to do with it; spite was the motive; spite against the skipper, an' about three an' a half bottles of bad Scotch. Old John Parbuckle's gone ahead since the *Nagasaki* days, I tell you! Money! Oh, crumbs! He's made of money! If you gave that old doughnut a shilling an' put him afloat in mid-Atlantic in a ship's dingey, he'd be rescued a couple of days later with a thousand pounds stowed away in his trouser pockets, made by sellin' seaweed to codfish! I know him. He's bought up every firm he could lay his hands on for the past twenty years, an' amalgamated with about three others, an' now he's head of the whole outfit.

"But he didn't forget me. No; he sent for me as soon as he knew; two years after that voyage you made in the *Umballa;* an' now I'm chief of the *Hyacinth!*"

And again Mr. Harrington was silent. He would tell me no more. He never had. He was cleared, and that was sufficint.

"HE WAS a friend of mine, too, that man who helped sink the *Nagasaki,*" he said presently. "An' but for him speakin', I'd have gone on, second or third, for the rest of my life, losin' job after job reg'lar till they threw me out on the scrap heap along with the other deadbeats!"

Digitized by Google

Mr. Harrington laughed and settled himself more comfortably in his chair, and I knew from the far-away look in his eyes and his twisted grin that something he had said had aroused in his mind a train of thought that would lead to a story.

"It's queer," he said, "how many men there are who'll go round, year after year, keepin' their mouths shut about themselves, an' yet knowin' the whole time there's bound to be trouble an' mis'ry for some one else if they don't speak. I've a theory myself that men like that can't see the other man's point of view, or the woman's, whichever it happens to be; an' sometimes it's both.

"Of course you might say that the man who did for me over the *Nagasaki* would have been a —— fool to have said a word. Maybe he would! He had nothin' to lose, though; I had. He was down an' out years before he wrote that letter to John Parbuckle, anyway. Clever, yes!

"From what you read you'd think sinkin' a ship was as easy as lettin' the water into a bath-tub. It's not. But you don't get conditions like they were on the *Nagasaki;* not once in a dozen years."

Mr. Harrington broke off then, and very deliberately proceeded to light his pipe, which he had laid on his desk while drinking his tea.

"Talkin' about bein' down an' out," he said presently, "did I ever tell you about a man I met when I was chief engineer of the *Hibiscus* before the war, tradin' to East African ports? Calden his name was; Roger Calden, one of the leadin' members of the old an' dishonorable profession of beach-combin'. I was thinkin' of him when I said that about men keepin' their mouths shut yet knowin' they'll bring trouble an' unhappiness on some one else if they don't speak.

"You never saw the *Hibiscus*. She was submarined in the Channel in the Summer of seventeen; I told you about that, didn't I? I went to her after I left the *Hollyhock*. Lorbury was the name of the Captain; John Lorbury. He was younger than me by about five years. I liked him. He did his job, an' he didn't try to do mine as well. He was a serious, steady-goin' kind of man, neat as a new pin, diff'rent from the skippers we used to get on the *Umballa* an' such-like tubs, of course.

"He didn't run after women, an' he drank no more than was good for him. An' that was the full extent of my knowledge of John Lorbury till we bumped into Calden.

"I don't think anything happened out of the ordinary on the voyage I'm talkin' about, till we put into Delagoa Bay—Lourenço Marques is the name of the town—to discharge a few cases of machinery an' take on bunkers for home. An' then it began.

"I've seen places a lot more livable in than Lourenço Marques. An' though whisky's the same price as beer an' we lay alongside an' not at anchor 'way out in some roadstead, most of us prayed we'd be off out to sea again quick. The days have gone by when all I wanted as soon as we reached port was booze. I'm older now, an' I'm wiser. Sudden death in a pint glass has lost its attraction. But Johnny asked me to go ashore for company one night, so I went. More because it was too hot to argue than anything else. That's how it come about that I met Calden.

"It was late when we left the hotel an' started back to the *Hibiscus*. Near the waterfront we heard a man shoutin' for help. English, of course. You remember the waterfront at Genoa, don't you—the railway trucks an' the mounds of coal? The risk's the same at Lourenço Marques; you don't hang around in the dark more than you need. But if you happen to hear some one yellin' at midnight, what do you do? Exactly! That's what we did. Down a small side alley we saw three men scrappin'.

"Just as we reached them the man who was bein' set on by the other two fell, an' they dropped on top of him. Johnny caught the man nearest him a crack under the ear. He rolled over, groanin'. The other took to his heels, helped by me.

"'Good!' says Johnny. 'Now let's have a look at our friend.'

"We helped him get to his feet.

"'Are you English?' says Johnny.

"Was he English? What a question! The man laughed.

"'I have the honor,' he says. Like that!

"The moon was shinin', an' we saw that his face was red an' covered with blotches; he'd got bags under his eyes an' a little wispy mustache an' a big nose, an' his lips were swollen.

"'Are you hurt?' says Johnny.

"'Not in body,' he says; 'in mind, yes; I'm disgracefully drunk!'

Digitized by Google

"An' he burst out laughin' an' hiccuped.

" 'Your pardon,' he says.

" 'Those men?' says the skipper.

" 'Thieves,' says he. 'If they stole from me, they'd be clever! Thank you for helpin' me.'

"An' then he staggered away, holdin' himself very straight for fear that he'd fall.

" 'Well,' says Johnny, 'that's a queer customer! I wonder if we'll ever see him again!'

"He needn't have wondered. We saw more of him than we wanted before we finished.

"Early next mornin' Johnny an' I were talkin' together outside his room when we saw him shufflin' toward us. He'd looked bad enough in the moonlight, but now in the daytime he was horrible. Nothin' less. He stood in front of us, chucklin'; his eyes, watery an' blood-shot, an' the lids all puffy, his face red an' blotchy, an' his little mustache pointed; a tall man with broad shoulders, but very thin an' gone at the knees.

"An' his clothes! He was dressed like a scarecrow tryin' to look respectable; soft hat, white shirt with a limp collar an' black tie; a gray tweed suit that looked like it was cut by a London tailor, the jacket with patched elbows an' most of the buttons gone, an' the trousers bagged at the knees, but creased in the right place; brown shoes with the uppers comin' away from the soles an' showin' bare feet underneath.

"He wasn't a particularly clean specimen either, though you could see where he'd washed his face, an' the one possible thing in his favor was he was sober as you or me.

"The beach-comber looked first at me an' then at Johnny.

" 'Captain Lorbury,' he says.

" 'Well,' says Johnny, 'that's my name.'

"You're sailin' for England, I believe,' he says.

" 'Tomorrer,' says Johnny, very short an' sharp. 'What if we are?'

" 'Captain,' says the beach-comber, 'I want you to take me with you!'

"For about a minute Johnny just leant against the rail of the bridge deck an' stared at him, not sayin' a word.

" 'Aren't you the man the chief engineer an' myself found scrappin' with two other men?' he says.

" 'I am,' says the beach-comber. 'Calden's my name. Roger Calden. Mebbe you've heard of me!'

" 'No,' says Johnny, 'I haven't. Why should I?'

"An' then it came without any warnin'.

" 'I'm the man,' he says, 'that Mary Fannell's engaged to!'

"He stood there like a caricature of a human bein', talkin' in his affected gentleman's voice, an' smilin' pleasantly at the pair of us. Johnny didn't know what to do or to say. He looked at this Calden man an' blinked two or three times an' put his hand to his throat.

" 'What are you talkin' about?' he said after a time.

" 'It's the truth,' said Calden. 'She's written to me about you often. Captain Lorbury of the *Hibiscus*. She's got quite a high opinion of you, captain. She wants me to go home to her. You'll give me the trip, captain, won't you? We'll be married, Mary says, as soon as I reach England.'

"An' by way of proof he brought out a packet of letters an' handed 'em to Johnny. Lorbury glanced through them. Then he says—

" 'All right, Calden, we'll take you home.'

"Myself, I'd have kicked him over the side an' had done with it. Calden was laughin'.

" 'That's good,' he says. 'Captain, you haven't got such a thing as a drink on board, have you? I've a touch of fever.'

"Fever! ——! I'd have fevered him!

" 'It's a bad place for fever,' says Johnny, 'I know.'

" 'It isn't the fever that's makin' you leave Lourenço Marques, is it, friend?' I says.

"He closed one eye.

" 'Why, no,' he says, 'you're right!'

"Then he coughed.

" 'Didn't you mention a drink, captain?' he says.

"We were sailin' next day. Calden went ashore with the skipper an' signed on an' came back to the ship at once. He wasn't goin' to set foot in Lourenço Marques again, he said, not even for whisky.

"I didn't know why till the afternoon when the woman arrived on board. She saw him standin' by the cabin door, smokin' a cigar, an' she grabbed hold of his arm before he could move an' began to talk to him in Portuguese or a mixture none of us

Digitized by Google

understood. She was a fierce-lookin' creature; a half-caste—half-Portuguese, half-Malay, by the look of her anyway—very slim an' active.

"Calden's face went pale under the blotches. He was scared, of course. Whatever it was she was sayin', he wouldn't agree. He shook his head. An' then . . . we ought to have known . . . he swung her away from him, an' quick as a flash she whipped out a knife from her waist . . . an' the mate made a dive an' caught hold of her wrist, an' the knife fell on the deck.

"Calden leant against the deck house an' laughed. After that they put her ashore. Fightin'. Calden told us he'd never seen her before. A lie naturally. Bedtime he was drunk.

"TAKIN' him all round, this Calden was one of the worst men that I ever met, an' I've met some beauties. I had plenty of chances to study him, too, it bein' the rule in the company that chief engineers mess with the captain an' deck officers, an honor which I don't know to this day if I appreciate.

"Anyhow I could watch Calden in peace. An' to see John Lorbury pretendin' he was some one we ought to respect gave me the horrors.

"'He's rough,' he says, 'but he's had a —— of a bad time, Harrington. He came out to Africa to make his fortune an' he failed an' he wouldn't own he was beat. I admire him for that,' says he; 'any one would. An' now he's got to go back to Mary without a cent to his name, to make her happy!'

"Myself, I smiled.

"'I told him,' says Johnny, 'that Mary's got money enough for the pair of 'em, an' that cheered him up.'

"It would. I wasn't surprized. Poor Mary! For a grown man John Lorbury was about as easy a mark as you'd find between here an' Hammersmith. If ever I saw wickedness stamped on a man's face it was there in Calden's; wickedness an' self-indulgence an' selfishness. He was clever, too. —— clever!

"Second day out he says to me, closin' one eye in that dirty, mean little way of his:

"'Chief,' he says, 'I'm not blind. Don't you believe it.'

"'How do you mean?' says I.

"He nods to where Johnny was walkin' to an' fro on the flyin' bridge.

"'But for bein' in love with me, Mary would have had that little squirt, eh? She's a wise kid, eh?'

"I looked him square in the face. My hands itched. I wanted to feel the feel of my fist on his flabby nose.

"'Wise, is she?' says I. 'If she married you,' I says, 'she'd be out of her mind. An',' says I, 'listen to me! You keep a civil tongue in your head, Mr. Calden, or mebbe I'll teach you a lesson in manners you won't like!'

"He laughed under his breath. But he steered clear of me afterwards. I was too tough an' too hard a case for the likes of him to handle. I'd been on the beach myself, or —— near it. He was scared of me.

"We loaded cargo at Beira, Zanzibar, Mombasa, Dar-es-Salem, Aden an' Port Sudan; copra an' hides an' ivory an' grain; an' it was the day after we left Beira, our first port of call, that the trouble came to a head. I dunno if you ever were told; but in the tropics dinner's at six in the ev'nin'; middle of the day would be lunch. At dinner then, Calden, who'd been drinkin' steady since breakfast an' was half-canned, starts in to give us the benefit of his views about women. I could see Johnny gettin' whiter an' whiter about the mouth. I waited.

"'They're all alike,' says Calden. 'Each of them, good or bad, has her price!'

"Johnny leant forward. 'Mr. Calden,' he says, 'I'm not goin' to have talk like that here. Stop it!'

"Calden sulked.

"'I thought you were broad-minded,' he says.

"'I am,' says Johnny. 'I'm broad-minded enough to know you've got a filthier tongue an' a filthier mind than any one else on the ship.'

"Calden got up from the table an' went to his room.

"'I'll cut off his liquor,' says Johnny. 'He's drinkin' too much.'

"It was one of those hot, steamy nights when you don't want to sleep, an' I was leanin' over the rail amidships, list'nin' to the cranks in the engine-room an' the noise of the water against the hull, when I heard Johnny come down from the upper bridge. A second later, I heard him swearin', an' then some one began to screech.

Digitized by Google

I guessed what it was. I ran up the steps to the lower bridge just as Johnny came to the door of his room, grippin' Calden by the back of his neck an' the seat of his trousers an' shakin' him. He was drunk, Calden was, an' in his arms was a bottle.

"I'll teach you to come here stealin' whisky,' says Johnny. 'You drunken swine!'

"He flung him from him, an' Calden pitched full length on the deck an' the bottle broke in the doorway, an' what was left of the whisky was spilt.

" 'Get up!' says Johnny. 'Get up!'

"But he couldn't. Not him. He lay where he was, whimperin' like a hurt kid because the whisky was wasted.

"Later on just when I was gettin' ready for bed Johnny knocked at the door of my room.

" 'Well, chief,' he says, 'what do you think of the man that I'm takin' to Mary Fannell, eh?'

"I told him I hadn't changed my opinion.

" 'Are you sure he's the right man?' I says.

" 'Haven't I seen the letters she wrote him,' says he, 'askin' why won't he come back to her? It's him right enough.'

" 'Put him ashore at Mombasa or Zanzibar,' I says.

" 'I can't,' says he. 'I gave him my word.'

" 'An' then he says:

" 'Harrington, I'm goin' to do as I said. I must. But I'm goin' to knock some sense into his head. I'm goin' to put the fear of the Almighty into him! From tomorrer he'll live in the fo'csle. An' you, Harrington, you'll put him to work, trimmin' coal.'

"Next mornin', after he'd slept off the effects of the whisky, Mr. Calden was taken down into the stoke-hole, kickin' an' strugglin', an' dumped on the plates in front of the furnaces an' told to be good. He was half-cryin' when I went in to him.

" 'You, you mis'rable twister!' he says. 'I'll pay you for this. I won't work, an' you needn't think it!'

" 'I can see him now, black from the coal-dust already, sittin' there in an old cotton shirt an' trousers an' spittin' out language hot enough to scorch the roof of his mouth, with the two firemen on watch an' the trimmer an' donkeyman starin' at him an' laughin'. If he'd fought, I'd have said there was hope for him even then, but he hadn't a fight in him.

" 'Cut out the cursin',' I says, 'an' sharp! You'll do as you're told. I've had orders from the captain, an' I'll carry 'em out! Understand! You work or we'll kill you!'

"He got to his feet then an' stood lookin' around an' scowlin' an' blinkin' his little red eyes. He couldn't believe it was true, of course.

"An' then I spoke to the trimmer, a small, hard-faced Tynesider, tough as scrap-iron, an' told him to take Calden an' teach him his job. Geordie laughed.

" 'Come on, mate!' he says.

"He turned his back; an' Calden, the —— fool, stooped an' picked up a shovel an' aimed a crack at his head. I thought he was killed. But the shovel hit on the bulkhead an' glanced on to his shoulder. Calden hadn't a chance. Not a chance. Geordie hit him, a half-arm blow on the jaw, an' Calden fell on his knees, blubberin'.

" 'Love us!' says Geordie. 'It's like hittin' an old fishwife!'

"An' then—nice little man, Geordie; eh? —then he kicked him. Hard.

" 'Get up!' he says. 'Get up, you bag of tripe!'

" 'Take him into the bunkers,' I says. 'An' the rest of you, get on with your work.'

"Trimmin' coal just about killed Calden, of course. Geordie was told he could go as far as he liked, short of actually cripplin' him. An' if, by the time we were home, Calden was fightin' back when any one hit him, Geordie would earn a couple of quid. Cruel? No! Calden was soft an' flabby, I dare say; but he was tough underneath. He couldn't have lived on the beach at Lourenço Marques if he hadn't have been. After about a week in the bunkers he met Johnny one mornin' on the bridge deck, an' he stopped an' spoke to him.

" 'You're on top now, Captain Lorbury,' he says, 'but you wait till we're home! I'll make life —— for you, same as you've done for me. Before I'm finished you'll be sorry I didn't kill you. What's more, I'll tell Mary what kind of scum you are, an' she'll hate the sight of you.'

"He was white with rage. Johnny laughed.

" 'Talk's cheap,' he says.

"An' then Geordie came up an' ran Calden for'ard.

" 'I'd have more respect for him,' says

Digitized by Google

Johnny, 'if I thought he meant what he said. But he doesn't.'

"That same ev'nin' there was trouble in the fo'csle. Once again Calden was found stealin'. Geordie had had half a bottle of rum hidden away in his locker. Calden found it an' drank every drop. They fought in the well-deck. Calden dropped at the first smack, as usual; the bosun yanked him up to his feet an' threw him at Geordie, who hit him again.

"'Fight!' says the bosun. 'You fight, you big coward! He oughter be licked for hidin' a bottle. Knock his lights out!'

"No good, though. Calden got a most awful lammin'. He was yeller, of course.

"Later, in the first watch, about one bell, I caught him on deck, leanin' over the rail, cryin' his heart out.

"'What the ——'s wrong with him now?' says the third engineer, from the alleyway. 'Shall I give him a jolt under the ear, chief, an' send him back to his work?'

"'No,' I says; 'wait what happens!'

"Minute or two after Geordie came out of the fiddley, bristlin'.

"'Here!' he says. 'What the —— are you snivelin' for now? Come on down at once an' do some work!'

"Calden turned on him.

"'—— you!' he says. 'One of these days you'll drive me too far, you devil!'

"An' then his courage left him an' he said somethin' about a breath of fresh air, an' he went below like a lamb. But I felt somehow that I'd seen a glimmer of something diff'rent stirrin' inside him.

"The hands were as much int'rested in the education of the old man's pet beachcomber, as they called him, as we were. Funny enough, Geordie, who hammered him reg'lar each day, had hopes of him. Why? Lord knows! The gen'ral opinion was that Calden 'ud never, not if he sailed for a hundred voyages, have nerve enough to turn on a rat. As for fightin' a man, why he wouldn't dare.

"But he did dare! Lord love us, yes! The day after we left Port Said.

"The row began in the stoke-hole, an' it finished on deck. One of the firemen an' Calden quarreled. I heard them yappin', an' I sent the fourth engineer in to tell them to dry up. The fourth asked what was wrong. An' Calden explained.

"The day that he first went to work one of the firemen said it was part of his job to help them. It wasn't, of course. But ever since then he'd worked in the stoke-hole as well as the bunkers. An' then that very mornin' Geordie had told him he needn't. In fact, he mustn't!

"One of the firemen, a big, black-headed west-country man, said there wasn't enough work to keep two trimmers busy; he must help the firemen clean out the furnaces an' so on. It was then that the fourth interfered.

"'I'm not goin' to do his work any more, mister,' says Calden.

"'All right,' says the fourth. 'Don't. If he tries any games on you, give him a punch on the jaw.'

"An' that's how things were when they came off watch at eight bells. Directly they reached the deck the fireman went up to Calden an' asked would he take a lickin' or fight. An' without answerin', Calden slammed his fist into his face, an' they fought. Yes, they fought, on the bridge deck, outside the fiddley, in full view of every one! An' nobody stopped them. The bosun tried, but Johnny called to him—

"'Let them alone!'

'We were a quiet ship, too!

"Calden surprized me. He'd no science, but he could fight at last. He couldn't hit straight, an' he couldn't dodge, an' he'd no footwork; but he went for the fireman with both fists, right an' left, head an' body, an' as soon as the fireman knocked him down, which he did again an' again, up he'd get without wastin' his time an' be at him at once.

"There were no rounds, of course. Ever see rounds when firemen or trimmers are fightin'? No, an' you never will. They fight till they drop.

"The odds were all on the fireman. He was hard. You could tell Calden was still more or less soft by the mess that the fireman's knuckles made of his face. He was cut over the cheeks, an' his nose was bleedin', an' one of his eyes was closed.

"But he didn't give in. He kept on hittin', chokin' for breath, winded, gruntin' each time he was hit, staggerin' about like a drunken cabby, with the crowd watchin', not sayin' a word, all but Geordie, who was yellin' advice:

"'Give it him, mate! Knock him cold! Use your left, you great porpoise!'

"An' so on. An' then—would you believe it?—the fight ended. How? The fireman

Digitized by Google

quit. He'd hurt his wrist! He couldn't go on. Or so he said.

"'Hurt your wrist, you —— liar!' Geordie says. 'Calden, you ruddy fool! Boot him!'

"But liar or not, that was the finish.

"Johnny was pleased.

"'Harrington,' he says, 'tell that trimmer he's earned his two pounds. We'll make a man of Calden yet!'

"Geordie was pleased, too, an' proud. I heard him say a day or two later:

"'You're lookin' more like a man, mate, an' not so much like a perils-of-drink picture in a tract. It's the work what's done it,' he says. 'Nothin' else.'

"An' Calden says—

"'Mebbe it is, but I'm not so sure.'

'An' he went draggin' around as though he'd got more on his mind to worry him than he'd ever had in his life before.

"AFTER we reached Malta we had a cold wind an' a choppy sea. Calden felt the change in the weather. He shivered an' looked ill, but said nothin'. I asked how he was. He said he was splendid. He wasn't.

"We caught it bad in the Bay. Sea-sickness on top of hard work an' the fightin' an' the lack of booze an' the cold just about finished the cure. There was something wrong—something deeper than we could see on the surface.

"I wondered what Mary Fannell would say when she saw her sweetheart. His face was very thin an' yet covered with loose skin; his cheeks were hollow; his eyes sunk way into his head. He'd be glad when the voyage was over, I knew. He'd had hardship enough an' trouble enough to last him the rest of his life without goin' out of his way for more. I was certain of that. But I was wrong.

"It's one thing to make a mistake on dry land, but it's a diff'rent matter at sea. This time it was Geordie, the day before we were due in the Thames. The worst of the gale had blown itself out, so we were pushin' ahead fine, rollin' still, but not more'n you look for in Winter in the Channel.

"Eight bells in the mornin' watch, I was in my room, gettin' ready for breakfast, when all of a sudden I heard some one on deck yell, 'Man overboard!' an' a second later the telegraph clanged in the engine-room an' I was out of my room an' down the ladder on to the platform in two shakes.

"As soon as I could I went up on deck. They'd lowered a boat, an' I could see them pullin' away from the ship. It was rainin' hard, cold as charity, freezin' cold.

"'Who is it?' I says.

"The second steward was makin' his way to the galley.

"'A trimmer,' he says. 'Geordie, they call him. He slipped an' was washed off the ladder goin' down to the well-deck for'ard.'

"'Geordie!' I says. 'Well, well!'

"'An',' says the steward, 'that beach-comber we took aboard at Lourenço Marques went after him.'

"'*What!*' I says. 'Calden!'

"'Yes, sir,' says the steward. 'Dived in after him. I saw him.'

"I held on to the rail an' watched. An' what could we see? Nothin'. Only the gray sky an' the rain, an' the gray sea, an' sometimes the white crest of a wave, an' the boat, risin' an' fallin', away ahead of us; for we'd turned, of course. If it had been two days before, or even the one, we'd never have got Geordie an' Calden again. Even as things were, wind fallin', sea no more than moderate, it was touch an' go. The boat reached 'em all right, but they were pretty far gone, the pair of 'em, by the time we got 'em on deck.

"Geordie was bleedin' from a cut in the forehead. Calden was white, like a fish's belly, an' half-dead, not able to stand on his feet.

"'Get the —— fools into the galley,' says Johnny. 'Get 'em in front of the fire an' put dry clothes on 'em.'

"An' then he told the steward to give 'em a tot of rum each, an' we went into breakfast.

"After we finished eatin', he says:

"'Harrington, Calden's a better man than we thought. I must have a talk with him before he turns in. You, too!'

"I think it was about the first time in his life John Lorbury was shy of any one. He didn't want to risk seein' Calden alone.

"Soon as he arrived an' the door of the room was closed Johnny came to the point.

"'Calden,' says he, 'I'd like to tell you how much you've improved. You're a diff'rent man now from the man I met at Lourenco Marques.'

"Calden didn't speak.

"'It's been tough on you,' says Johnny, 'but it's done you good. You must get your

Digitized by Google

gear out of the fo'csle an' come back to your old room. An',' says Johnny, 'I'd like to shake hands with you an' wish you luck.'

"Well, what happened?

" 'Captain Lorbury,' says Calden, 'you're right. I am diff'rent. You're the only man that I ever met that's helped me, barrin' that trimmer, Geordie. I owe you more than I can ever pay back.'

" 'Nonsense,' says Johnny. 'I did it for Mary's sake an' not for yours. You've got to remember that.'

" 'I know,' says Calden; 'but that don't alter the fact, does it? But for me you'd have married Mary yourself, wouldn't you?'

" 'Well,' says Johnny, very short in his manner, 'what's that to do with you?'

" 'Nothin',' says Calden; 'but you've done what most fellers wouldn't have done, that's all.'

"An' then Johnny says:

" 'Calden, Mary's comin' aboard as soon as we get in. She's stayin' with friends in London,' he says, 'an' she wrote that she'd look out for the ship in the paper.'

" 'Did you say you were bringin' me home?' says Calden.

" 'No,' says Johnny; 'I didn't.'

" 'Well,' says Calden, 'don't. Just as a favor I'll ask you to let me speak to her first. I've got to tell her myself, my own way—everything.

" 'I want her to see me,' he says, 'without you givin' her any warnin'. An' I'm goin' to ask you to let me finish the voyage in the fo'csle. I've never done any work in my life before. I'd like Mary to know I can hold down a job at last. Even if it's only a job trimmin' coal.'

"An' then without waitin' for Johnny to speak he left us.

" 'I wonder,' says Johnny, 'was he afraid what I'd tell Mary about him?'

" 'I wonder,' says I.

"Next afternoon Mary Fannell was waitin' for the *Hibiscus*. As soon as she saw Johnny I knew that whatever Calden had been to her once, he was nothin' now. An' yet if Calden was livin', if he wanted her, she'd marry him. She'd keep her word.

"She was talkin' to Johnny an' me at the foot of the ladder that led to the lower bridge, talkin' an' laughin', when Calden came up out of the stoke-hole. He stood for a while starin', an' then he walked, straight up to her. She looked at him puzzled an' haughty, an' drew nearer to Johnny an' took hold of his arm.

"I wasn't surprized. What girl wouldn't have felt scared of a man like Calden, lookin' like he looked? His face was black from the coal-dust; there was coal in the loose folds of skin, grained in; his eyes were red; his clothes were in rags; he was what he seemed—a trimmer just out of the bunkers.

" 'Are you Miss Fannell?' he says.

"She didn't know him, of course.

" 'I am,' she says, very cold an' distant.

" 'I heard you were comin' aboard,' says Calden. 'I was given a letter in Lourenço Marques to give to you, personally!'

" 'A letter!' says Mary, an' the pink in her cheeks was less pink, an' her hands trembled as he gave her the letter.

"Johnny took a step toward Calden. Then he stopped. What could he do? Nothin', of course. What did it mean? Listen!

"As Mary read, the color came back an' her cheeks were pink an' her eyes shinin' like stars. Yes, it's a fact. Like stars. An'—

" 'Johnny,' she says, 'it's a letter from Roger Calden!'

"She laughed, she was so excited an' pleased an' happy.

" 'Read it!' she says.

"When Johnny had finished he looked scared.

" 'Mary,' says he, 'may I show the chief?'

" 'Johnny,' she says, 'you may show the whole world if you want to!'

"The letter was short. Calden was sorry to have to say what he had to say. It would hurt her perhaps, but he must speak the truth. He was goin' to marry a girl in Lourenço Marques. He hoped she would find some one else. He was givin' the letter to a trimmer from the *Hibiscus*, a rough-lookin' man, he said, but a man who owed him a kindness. There were reasons why it wouldn't be right to give the letter to Captain Lorbury, whom he knew by sight.

"That was all. Johnny an' I looked at each other an' said nothin'.

" 'Johnny,' says the girl, 'I'm so glad!'

"An' then she turned.

" 'Why,' she says, 'where's he got to?'

"Calden was gone. She seemed relieved in her mind.

" 'A terrible-lookin' man!' she says. 'Isn't he? How ever could Roger make friends with a creature like that?'

Digitized by Google

"An' then she shivered.

" 'Johnny,' she says, 'you must give him five shillings, or ten if you like, from me. Will you?'

" 'Why, yes,' says Johnny. 'Why, yes, of course!'

"An' then I went to my room an' left them.

"Later, when Johnny had taken Mary Fannell ashore, I saw Calden an' Geordie at the head of the gangway.

" 'Calden,' I says, 'I want to speak to you.'

" 'Well?' he says.

" 'Why did you do it?' I says.

" 'I've learnt my lesson,' says he. 'That's why. When I came aboard at Lourenço Marques,' he says, 'I was willin' to take Mary because she had money. I'd live without work, same as I'd done all my life. I wanted comfort an' plenty of booze. I'm not so sure that I don't want it now.'

"He laughed.

" 'But,' he says, 'you saw what she thought when she saw me, didn't you? I'm not blind, mister. I know what I am better than you do!'

"I said something then about him havin' made good, but he cut me short.

" 'Whether I did or I didn't,' he says, 'it's no matter. It's Lorbury she wants. Every —— letter she wrote to me,' he says, 'was full of him. He'll marry her, an' he'll make her happy.'

"He leant over the rail by my side an' stared at the lights ashore. I heard Geordie cough.

" 'I could have had all the money I wanted out of her,' says Calden, 'once; but I daren't now. If she'd been told I was on the ship she'd have made herself do what she didn't do of her own accord. She'd have pretended; she'd have said she was glad to see me.

" 'I know Mary,' he says; 'you don't. If she'd known I was Roger Calden, the man she'd promised to marry, she'd have lost faith in everything.'

"He laughed again under his breath.

" 'Why didn't I tell her five years ago what I'd made of myself,' he says, 'an' set her free? There was a woman in Lourenço Marques,' he says, 'a half-caste, who was good to me. I ran away from her.'

"I stopped him. His business, not mine.

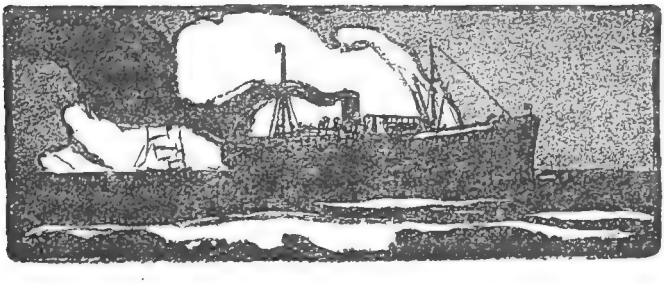
" 'What are you goin' to do now?' I says.

" 'Mr. Harrington,' he says, 'I'm goin' ashore to see how much drink I can stow away without gettin' drunk. Good night!'

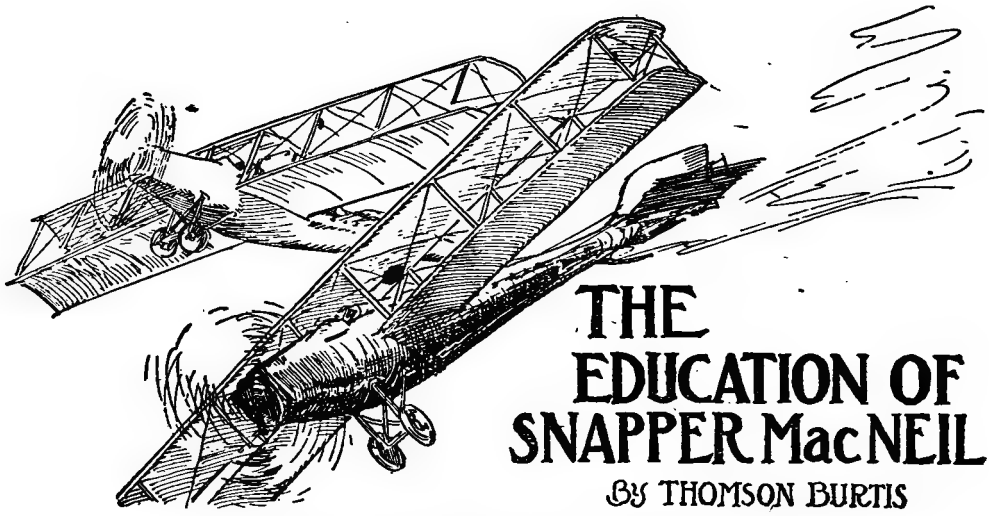
"I watched him an' Geordie in the light of the arc lamps walkin' along the quay.

"That's about all. Mary an' Johnny are married now, of course. What's more, they're happy. An' Calden! Last I heard he was a corp'ral in the Military Police in Le Havre! Queer, eh? It's a funny old world, isn't it!"

And Mr. Harrington sighed and stared out of the port into the darkness.



Digitized by Google



THE EDUCATION OF SNAPPER MacNEIL

By THOMSON BURTIS

Author of "Groody Moves On," "Riding Herd—Modern Style," etc.

CAPTAIN FLANDERS surveyed the eight flyers of his squadron assembled in his office for the daily officers' meeting, with a broad smile.

"I have news," he said. "We're having a new officer ordered here."

"Not a major, I hope," said Jack Beaman, observer extraordinary.

"No, a lieutenant. And his name is Jim Broughton."

"Jim Broughton ordered here? When?" asked Beaman eagerly.

"Tomorrow," grinned the captain, equally delighted.

Every other officer, save a freckled faced, red-headed little fellow seemed to share their C.O.'s enthusiasm. The sole dissenter spoke up now.

"Is he the Broughton that burst into print a few weeks ago because he flew the Secret Service man that captured that big crook Hayden over into West Virginia?" he enquired.

"That's the man," replied Flanders, still grinning.

"He's a peach, too," Nolan interjected.

He was over six feet tall, with a pair of steady, gray eyes and an atmosphere of quiet capability about him.

"Just what was the straight of this West Virginia business, Cap'n? I was down in that God-forsaken hole in Tennessee on my forced landing at the time and never did see the papers."

"I can tell you," said Beaman, who had been at Langham Field in Virginia all Summer, taking part in the bombing experiments which the Air Service conducted.

"Broughton was at Langham Field for the bombing and while he was there a secret service bird named Graves got Broughton and Hinkley—both ex-border men you know—to fly him over into West Virginia and land close to the shack where this big crook Hayden and some of his underlings were hiding out. They captured him and brought him back all right, and Graves tried to keep the identities of Broughton and Hinkley a secret so that no member of Hayden's gang would have a chance to take revenge on them. Some Washington newspaperman got hold of it though—of course it was a peach of a story with a crash at night and a lot of other stuff in it—and then the papers blossomed out with it strong."

"I suppose the famous Broughton'll start in to high-tone all the ordinary flyers," remarked Snapper MacNeil, which was the red-headed stripling's name.

"Oh shut up, Snapper," big Bob Nolan said half-jestingly. "You never handed a man on earth a thing, did you?"

MacNeil's freckled face grew sullen.

"These big-headed pilots get my goat," he said. "Why——"

"You'd better stop before you say too much, MacNeil," Flanders cut in with his black eyes snapping. "Jim Broughton is a

Digitized by Google

fine chap and an old friend of mine, and I don't want you or anybody else popping off before you know what you're talking about!"

MacNeil looked at the floor and said nothing, although his face was crimson.

Among the various types of men which the Air Service attracts into its fold, there is a sprinkling of high-strung youths with little experience or knowledge of life behind them, who need a strong hand over them at times. Snapper was one of them. At bottom everybody in the outfit liked him, although there were a dozen surface faults in the youngster which the older men disliked. He frequently embarrassed the whole squadron by his swaggering attitude among the artillerymen of Camp Henry, where the 87th squadron was stationed. He talked too much about flying in general and his own air-work in particular.

There was a momentary silence when the captain finished his remarks, broken by the C.O. himself.

"I knew Jim when we were both sergeants, a couple of years before the war. He's a nut on guns and a wonderful shot. He's a pistol expert with either hand and I don't believe there was a man along the border who could shoot like him except a couple of Dave Fitzpatrick's outlaws."

"He sure is a marvel with any sort of firearm," Beaman corroborated his chief. "He must have twenty-five pistols, shotguns, rifles and whatnot that he carries around with him. He pets 'em like they were children."

"Well, I'm sure glad he's coming," stated Flanders, glancing fleetingly at the immobile MacNeil.

Snapper's eyes were still on the floor. He was entirely too ready to take offense for a man who constantly invited disciplinary action, thought the captain for the hundredth time. Sometimes he was inclined to think that it might be a good thing for the outfit if MacNeil were transferred out. He didn't seem to be getting over his disposition to talk himself to the skies and everybody else into the ground. And the 87th was a small isolated outfit, where a man like Snapper had more of a chance to feed his vanity and make himself obnoxious than at a regular field.

"There's one more matter I want to take up," the C.O. went on finally. "Recruiting has been opened up again, and now that we are a full-fledged squadron we need fifty more men. The Corps Area Air Officer has ordered that we send a recruiting party to Blaney, Kentucky, which is a sizeable town back in the hills and hasn't been touched by recruiting parties since the War. He thinks we can get our full quota out of Blaney alone.

"I've found out that in three weeks the session of court opens there—Blaney is the county seat of Hale County, and any of you who've ever been around Kentucky much know that court day is a big day."

"And liable to be —— exciting, too," chuckled Jack Beaman, who had been born in Louisville. "If you get a chance to see some Hale County feudists in action."

"I know it," said the captain. "Probably we'll have to be extra careful in all we do, although I don't imagine that Blaney people themselves resemble the hill-billies very much. Anyway, we can get next to a lot of people by going on court day—it's like a county fair. Nolan, suppose you take charge of all preparations. I'll talk with you about the trip right now—stay in the office a minute. That's all."

All the airmen except Nolan filed out, MacNeil moping along by himself.

"There goes Snapper, off on another spell of his patented brand," grinned Hamblin, a stocky, good-humored chap whose hair was almost as red as MacNeil's.

"It's a shame that he won't learn to pull in his neck," stated Beaman. "He tells everything he knows and more, and never gave another flyer credit for being able to get off the ground without cracking up. His idea of a good time is a two-day trip in a smoking compartment with everybody admiring his wings and asking him questions. Ask him whether Fonck got any Huns, and Snapper'd say the lucky stiff got quite a few, but that he really couldn't fly."

"The cap'n is getting so he steps on him quick though," opined little Sam Seaton, twirling his microscopic mustache.

"Which makes Snapper sore as a pup, but I guess it does him good," said Hamblin, his eyes on the retreating figure of the subject of conversation.

MacNeil was in the dumps, which was growing to be more and more of a chronic condition with him. The captain was pouncing on him without delay of late, whenever MacNeil's conversation grew obnoxious, which was frequently.

Digitized by Google

Before worming his way into the Air Service, Snapper had never been or done anything at all remarkable. From the time he had received his commission and stepped down Houston Street in San Antonio, Texas, with the wings across his chest and the gold bars on his shoulders, he thought of himself as "somebody."

Flying is an individual thing—one of the professions where a man's skill shows, and shows quickly. It is possible for the youngest and most reckless of shavetails to be far more prominent on the flying field than the distinguished colonel who commands it. Snapper became like the most empty-headed stars of stage or screen, and his efforts were constantly bent toward one end—to reach and maintain a position of prominence, which is easy to do in the flying game if a man risks his neck often enough.

Camp Henry, filled with men who knew little of flying, represented MacNeil's greatest opportunity. Where seasoned veterans like Nolan and Gobel and Hamblin, far beyond their grand-stand days, were satisfied to take things easily until an emergency came along, MacNeil was up stunting wildly for the benefit of onlookers below.

This resulted in his being talked about a great deal, and he had the reputation of being the best flyer of the squadron, except among the few people who knew much about flying. That Hamblin brought a ship down in flames was not half so important to them, from the standpoint of flying skill, as the fact that MacNeil was usually good for ten or eleven consecutive loops when he went up.

More and more his position became an obsession with him, and it took the form of constant effort indirectly to give credit to himself by disparaging his fellows. His infrequent praise was grudgingly given, and then with a patronizing air which seemed to indicate that he was giving a really mediocre flyer more than his due.

He would not have admitted it to himself, but he resented the thought of Broughton's coming. He did not know the man, but he felt as if he would have to share the center of the spotlight with some one else. Up to now he had been the most prominent of the flyers. All the rest of them were young men who didn't care about any one's opinion of their flying and were well satisfied to stay home and say little while in camp. It had been very pleasant to walk into the big Camp Henry Officers' Club and there talk flying to interested and ignorant listeners. To Camp Henry he was a wonderful all-round pilot, and the veteran of many a narrow escape. When Broughton came the interest of the camp would turn to him.

The call-down the captain had given him hurt his pride, and the effect of the whole incident was to crystallize his instinctive dislike for Broughton—or rather, what Broughton represented to him. Without ever having seen him, he was prepared to show how unwelcome, to him, the well-known flyer was.

BROUGHTON arrived next day. He was a stocky, blond chap with a pair of steady gray eyes set in a square, tanned face. His speech was soft and deliberate, and very infrequent. When he smiled his mouth widened slowly, and there was a change in his eyes that seemed to tell the world that the smile was sincere. There was an effect of warmth and geniality about Broughton when he smiled. Instinctively one felt that he was a man to be depended on.

He got a royal welcome from every one except MacNeil. Nolan had known him a short time, Beaman and Gobel had met him at Langham, and the captain had been his friend for years. The other flyers had known him on the border patrol.

The men were seated on the veranda steps in front of the Officers' Quarters when Broughton arrived, and every one noticed the curtness with which MacNeil acknowledged the introduction. If Broughton did he made no sign, but seated himself and looked around him appreciatively.

"Nice-looking place you've got, Harry," he said to the captain.

"You bet it is. Captain Kennard and his outfit got it whipped into shape when they were here, and we think we've finished it off pretty well."

On the opposite side of the road which they were facing, four corrugated iron hangars stretched north and south the long way of the field. The officers' quarters occupied one of a line of buildings paralleling the hangars—barracks, headquarters, garage and supply buildings. Behind them were the photo hut and radio station. A

Digitized by Google

half-mile south, Camp Henry was spread out for two miles, lying at the bottom of a gradual grade which sloped up to Goddard Field.

"I understand you're a full-fledged squadron here now," remarked Broughton, cocking his hat over his eyes to shield them from the sun.

"Yes indeed. You're slated to be a flight commander, Jim."

"Fine."

It was not so fine to MacNeil.

"Getting in soft already," he told himself sullenly.

There was nothing in Broughton to arouse MacNeil's dislike, and Snapper knew it. It was jealousy, pure and simple, but MacNeil was not introspective enough to realize that, and would not have admitted it if he had. Being very young, he started in immediately to show his colors. Flanders mentioned the recent bombing tests, and as Broughton started to answer MacNeil cut in:

"Now we'll have the story of 'how I did it,' by our newest officer."

Broughton's eyes rested on MacNeil for a moment, without a sign of a change in them. Then he proceeded equably with what he was about to say.

Time and time again in the ensuing days MacNeil showed his dislike for Broughton in similar petty ways. He judged the temper of the squadron rightly, and hence did not show his hand too openly. It was more a matter of the spirit shining through than the things he actually said or did.

As MacNeil had prophesied, enterprising reporters played up the new acquisition to the flying forces of Camp Henry, and there was a stir of interest throughout the camp when the artillery learned who Broughton was. That capture of Hayden had resulted in the uncovering of a huge criminal conspiracy and the capture of half a hundred crooks who had been working under Hayden's leadership.

That the quiet, reserved Broughton did not capitalize his notoriety at all, did not count in his favor with MacNeil. In fact, Jim seemed to shun all contact with people, except his fellow officers in the squadron. He never attended dances or other affairs of a social nature, and it was impossible to make him talk about himself.

It was two weeks after his arrival, during which interval MacNeil had been growing a bit more open all the while in showing just how low Broughton was in his estimation, when things came to a bit of a showdown.

In a desperate effort to keep his prominence in Camp Henry, Snapper began flying like a wild man. He was in Broughton's flight, so Jim remonstrated with him a few times without trying to use his official authority. All he got in return were sneering remarks about barracks flyers and old women who got scared every time a real flyer tried to stunt a little. Immediately after the last conversation along this line Snapper got into his De Haviland, went up three thousand feet above the field, and deliberately broke all regulations by stunting a D.H. to the extent of thirteen consecutive loops. He came down with his face wreathed in a satisfied grin and his eyes snapping gleefully. He had seen people all over camp watching him—the roar of the four hundred horsepower Liberty coming out of a loop had been loud enough to make half the camp rush to windows and doors to see what was happening. MacNeil had never had a chance to be a hero before getting into the Air Service, and it was becoming more and more of a disease with him.

When he climbed out of the cockpit after running out his motor, Broughton was waiting for him.

"You're on the ground for a week, MacNeil," he said simply, his steady gray eyes meeting MacNeil's firmly.

"What for?"

"Breaking stunt regulations for De Havilands," was the calm reply.

For the first time the raging MacNeil dared to let distinctly personal animus show in his speech.

"It's —— lucky for you that you slip in here and get a flight commander's job so you can work on flyers that really fly. I don't blame you, Broughton. Any one that flies as little as you do must hate to have some one go up and——"

"That'll be all from you," Broughton cut in without a trace of rancor.

His big fingers were twitching a little at his side. If Captain Flanders had been there and noticed that he might have saved what happened.

"Oh, it will," was the angry reply. "This hasn't got anything to do with your being a flight commander, see? I'm taking the grounding without a quibble, but I'm

Digitized by Google

telling you that I know why you're doing it!"

Busy mechanics working around the four De Havilands on the line cast curious looks at MacNeil. He was popular with them because of the flashiness of his flying. Broughton stood in a neutral position as far as they were concerned, because thus far he had shown nothing in particular to set him apart. NacNeil was flushed and angry, Broughton still apparently calm.

He made no reply to MacNeil's last outburst. He was trying with all his might to restrain the furious impulse which bade him punish that fiery youngster before him with his fists. And yet he knew that if he did he would always regret it. His wrath at MacNeil's insults was not blind enough to make him forget that he, veteran of a hundred rough and tumble battles on ships of the seven seas and in hard-boiled outfits along the border, could break the slim MacNeil in two with his bare hands.

"Your grounding is all off for the next fifteen minutes," he said at length, both hands clenched tightly at his sides. "Get in your ship and meet me at two thousand feet."

MacNeil, puzzled and astonished at Broughton's words, hesitated.

"That's an order, —— you!"

The words tumbled out as though driven by some long pent-up force within that had finally broken all barriers. Broughton was slightly crouched, and all at once the non-committal face and usually placid eyes, his whole body, seemed to have a tigerish quality. He literally blazed with sudden unrestrained fury.

MacNeil started for his ship without a word. His hand shook slightly as he adjusted his helmet and goggles.

Broughton forced himself to walk to his ship slowly, and to go through the motions of starting it with deliberation. He turned on the gas petcocks, primed the motor, and pumped up the air pressure. As the mechanics swung the propellor to suck gas into the cylinders he put on a pair of goggles which he took from his pocket.

MacNeil's ship was already running when Broughton's mechanics yelled, "Contact!" and he obediently turned on one switch. The Liberty caught at the second swing, and Jim settled down to warm it up. He never allowed a mechanic to warm a motor for him. Few border patrol men do.

It was physical torture for him to sit there and slowly, with infinite care, warm the Liberty. He needed a physical outlet for the deadly anger which had him in its grip. But he knew himself and fought it with all his might, forcing himself to wait for the duel ahead.

MacNeil taxied to the higher end of the small hilly field and took off as Broughton ordered his mechanics to pull the blocks. He did not wait to taxi, but as soon as men on one wing had turned him around took off cross-wind and directly across the field.

He climbed to two thousand feet, and while he tooled the ship upward got a grip on himself.

The younger pilot was waiting for him over the field. Broughton swung his ship to the left, his motor throttled to fifteen hundred revolutions. Five hundred yards away from MacNeil's ship he was headed directly toward it, his De Haviland pointed at the tail of the other ship.

This gave MacNeil ample time to start his bank and have an equal chance to get on Broughton's tail.

Broughton was the one who succeeded, however. When MacNeil was on the opposite side of the circle in which the two ships were milling, Broughton jerked his stick all the way back and gave his ship rudder. Both De Havilands were already in steep banks, but Broughton's ship went half on its back. He caught it in time, and when he came out, had cut across the circle and was practically on MacNeil's tail.

He opened the Liberty wide and slid up until he was partially over MacNeil's ship —perhaps five feet above it. With his hand on the throttle, sliding it forward and back to constantly keep his position, he rode MacNeil, and began forcing him down, for the ship underneath could not gain altitude without colliding with the one so close overhead.

MacNeil struggled desperately. With his head turned backward, watching the great plane only inches above him, he twisted and banked and spun to try to shake off his pursuer. Broughton stayed above him like some implacable fate, ever diving downward until MacNeil was down to fifteen hundred feet. With the courage of desperation the younger airman nosed down, and then pulled straight up in a loop. Broughton just turned off in time to escape a collision. He throttled completely, and

Digitized by Google

for a moment jockeyed the stalled ship until MacNeil swept below him. Then he shoved the throttle full ahead, and as Snapper leveled out of the zoom for which he had used the extra speed of the ship Jim was behind him again, riding just above him and forcing him down. It was never the higher ship which gave ground when a collision seemed inevitable.

Snapper fought well, but it was a losing battle. De Havilands are too big and frail and clumsy for combat work, but that was one day when everything known to flying was displayed in the sky above the watching camp. Jim's forte was instinctive estimation of speed and distance and to the wondering experts of the squadron, the riding down of Snapper MacNeil was the most wonderful bit of flying they had ever seen.

Snapper did everything he knew to shake off his Nemesis, without avail. Renversments, Immelmann turns, steep dives, vertical banks—whenever he finished a maneuver his back-flung eyes saw that other ship, close above him, diving at him, compelling him to nose down to avoid being hit.

A thousand feet, six hundred. On the ground every flyer and mechanic was watching with shining eyes, and throughout the camp vehicles had stopped on the road and officers and men alike had poured out of buildings and were standing with upturned faces, watching those two twisting, roaring airplanes. It was curiously like some battle to the death between monsters of the air, roaring with rage and spitting flame. It was hard to visualize human beings as having a part in it.

There was something immutable, unescapable, terribly inevitable in that struggle and the way Broughton's ship held its position.

Snapper was game to the last notch. He might have got away by merely giving up the struggle and flying straight, but he never faltered in his efforts to shake off Broughton. They fought all over the air above the cantonment, but little by little came lower. Rarely did MacNeil get a chance to climb, for Broughton's ship was half over him.

At two hundred feet MacNeil quit—they were too low for any further acrobatics. The slim young pilot was breathing in gasps and his face was burning like fire, as if he had come through a tremendous physical ordeal. As a matter of fact, it is far from light work to twist a De Haviland around as MacNeil had been doing.

His heart was overflowing with bitter humiliation as he started his dive for the field. He could see the packed onlookers below, and knew that Broughton was his master in the air and that they had seen him prove it.

But he was destined for still further punishment. At a hundred feet, with his motor cut, he glanced sideward at Broughton's plane which had kept its position during the glide in. The De Haviland flashed past him, slightly to one side and partially under him. MacNeil turned on his motor and zoomed sharply to avoid hitting Broughton. The brief burst of power meant that he must go around again, for Goddard Field was small and rough and he would overshoot.

For ten minutes he tried to land, and could not. Broughton was underneath him constantly, forcing him up. It was a terrible nervous strain on MacNeil, for Broughton seemed to pass him by a hair's breadth. Few flyers in any service could have done what Broughton was doing with such accuracy. MacNeil was forced upward to a thousand feet, when, with a parting flourish of its tail as Broughton wing-turned the pursuing De Haviland left. Broughton came down in a steep sideslip, made a partial stall landing and taxied to the line.

Grinning mechanics put blocks under the wheels and held the wings while Broughton ran his motor out of gas. Captain Flanders and the rest of the flyers were standing around, waiting. Broughton's ship was as loose as a ship could be and still fly. When the mechanics tested the wires there was an inch of play in some of them, testifying to the terrific strain the ship had been under.

Jim climbed out deliberately, wiped his oil-grimed face and sauntered toward the captain.

"Bawl me out, Harry, and ground me. It was all my fault, and I knew as well as you that I shouldn't be doing those things with a D. H.," he said.

"You sure did plenty," Nolan informed him. "I'll bet Snapper thought there were a thousand ships chasing him."

The slim, clean-cut C. O. said nothing, but there was a half-smile on his lips as he surveyed Broughton. He had known him

Digitized by Google

too long and too well in the old days not to realize that there was something back of that exhibition. Broughton was the last man in the world to do what he had just done spontaneously. He was the sort of man who always has a couple of aces up his sleeve, able to do more than he ever showed unless there was a real reason for it.

So he said little while the group of officers chaffed Broughton on his flying and the way he had treated MacNeil. Snapper's ship was almost lost to sight, flying toward Louisville, thirty miles away.

As Broughton started across the road toward the quarters the captain joined him.

"What was the matter, Jim?" he asked casually.

"What do you mean?"

"Don't kid me," returned the captain. "What happened between you and MacNeil?"

Broughton seated himself deliberately on the veranda steps, and he smiled one of his infrequent slow smiles as he met the captain's eyes.

"I might as well tell you, I guess. I grounded MacNeil for stunting a D. H. right after I had reminded him of regulations, and he told me that I was doing it as a matter of personal spite. That's pretty hard to take, Harry."

Flanders nodded, a troubled look on his face. He was thirty, looked twenty-five, and in military matters was much older than his actual age would indicate, for he had fought his way up in the army for eleven years. He had been a private in the Phillipines, a sergeant in Mexico, a top-kick on the border and a major in France. And his small outfit was facing a dilemma which troubled him.

"I'm afraid MacNeil will have to be transferred," he said half to himself.

"Why does he dislike me so much?"

"Search me, Jim."

"I think I've got him placed. Probably my knowing so many of you before, and that little notoriety I got over the Hayden deal, has made MacNeil a little jealous. I've noticed that he takes every compliment to another man as an inference that he is not as good. It strikes me that he has a passion for being the leader in anything, and he's —— unwilling to kow-tow to anybody else."

That was a long speech for Broughton. The C.O. nodded in agreement.

"How did you happen to have that dog-fight up there?"

"I thought it would be a good thing for the good of MacNeil's soul, and if I hadn't done something like that I'd have half-killed him."

"It's a wonder you didn't," said Flanders.

"I'm trying to get wise to myself lately, Harry. No more of that old rough stuff for me, if I can help it."

There was a moment's silence. Both men were thinking back six or seven years to those days as enlisted men, when a top-kick on the border had a man's job if there ever was one. And of them all Broughton had been most prominent. Mexicans from one end of the border to another had feared Broughton as they did few men, be they Rangers or known killers. Jim would have been a bad man for MacNeil to have fooled with in those days.

"Well, we'll see whether your lesson has done him any good," said the captain finally. "I won't decide yet to ask for his transfer, but I am going to take him off that recruiting trip next week."

"I wouldn't, Harry. All he needs is to learn a little humility, and to get a little experience under his belt. Two to one he's an only child. And you know, now that I've worked myself back to normal again, I can't help but like the little cuss."

"Can't see any reason why you should be crazy about him," grinned Flanders.

"There isn't. But he's a game little devil, and he'd tackle his weight in wildcats, I believe. He's got guts and fire and all that stuff, but it's all spoiled by his overgrown head."

"I sometimes doubt whether he honestly thinks he's so good—it's the desire to be and then have it recognized that's biting him."

"May be. But if you keep him off that trip it'll break his fool kid heart, I believe. You might spoil the makings of a good man by rubbing it in like that after what happened today. And for the love of Mike ground me so he won't have any basis for thinking there are any favorites."

"O.K. You're both grounded until we start the trip next week. That ought to be a good time."

"What's the dope?" inquired Broughton.

"We'll stay a week. There'll be bomb exhibitions with those small Coopers, machine-gun demonstration, formation flying

Digitized by Google

and stunting and all that stuff. I'm sending Nolan on ahead to pick out a field and get the town all primed. We'll take five or six sergeants who can sing and make speeches and mix around generally. I want to get all our men from Blaney if I can, and there'll be a continuous stream of special events for every day. In a week we ought to know the town pretty well and have our nets spread wide."

"Well, the folks ought to know all about the Air Service with that program," commented Jim. "You'll take McNeil along, won't you?"

"Sure—the only reason I didn't want to was for your sake. If you can stand any unpleasantness the rest of us can."

"Perhaps we can convince him some way that applause isn't the only thing in the world."

"He didn't get much up there today," grinned the captain. "It did me good to see you take a fall out of him."

"It did me good too, and let's hope that MacNeil makes it unanimous."

A WEEK later four De Havilands and a Fokker taxied out on Goddard Field, bound for Blaney. They lined up, and one by one took off in the order which had been assigned by the captain.

As soon as all were in the air, Flanders, leading the formation, started circling until by means of cutting the circle all ships were equally spaced. Then he dived and zoomed, the signal to get into formation. Gobel and MacNeil gave their ships the gun and moved up behind the captain, one on either side. Then came Seaton and Broughton, taking their stations behind Gobel and MacNeil.

Jim was flying the Fokker. He had had a little experience with singleseaters at Langham Field, and had dropped a few of the small twenty five pound Cooper bombs which pursuit ships carry, so had been assigned to give the bombing exhibition at Blaney. He was best known as a big ship pilot, but there was no one else in the 87th who had ever had any experience bombing from a single seater.

Flanders had suggested that he give the stunt exhibition, likewise, but Jim had dropped out in favor of MacNeil. Somehow or other he was becoming very much interested in MacNeil, and greatly desirous of taking that fiery young gentleman under his wing for a while for the purpose of getting some of the youthful foolishness out of him.

He flew along now with his mind ranging back over the last week, and wondering just where he stood with MacNeil. It was comparatively easy for him to keep the feather-like Fokker in its proper place—much more simple than handling a De Haviland. Heavy ships have so much more momentum and are so much slower in answering to the urge of a suddenly opened motor, that in formation flying a man must be a good judge of speed and distance to avoid over-running the ship ahead. The Fokker answered instantly to the smallest change in motor or controls, so Jim's job was comparatively simple.

MacNeil would undoubtedly have been much surprized had he known the tenor of Broughton's thoughts. That mock combat in which he had been bested had affected MacNeil strangely. It seemed to have made him ashamed. He acted as though his fellow-flyers must think that he was a dud in the flying game because he had not bested Brougton. Instead of joining the bunch in the evening he would stay by himself.

Not so over at the Officers' Club, however. Beaman, who was married and lived at the club, brought back word that MacNeil had successfully explained away his beating in the air, and had even gone so far as to say that although Broughton was a pretty fair pilot, he, MacNeil, had been so scared that the inexperienced Broughton would run into him that he had landed as quickly as possible. Several collisions had been saved by his quick thinking, he told the camp in general.

However, he had not ragged Broughton by word or action since that day. In fact, he had very little to say or do with any of his outfit. Then had come the day when Broughton persuaded the C.O. to let MacNeil give the stunt exhibition.

"It will be like the nectar of the gods to him, Harry," Jim had told Flanders.

"It'll swell his head to the bursting point to have the awed admiration of the whole town though," Flanders had warned Broughton.

But Broughton, with the insight into human nature that fifteen wandering years had given him, believed that perhaps he might drive an entering wedge into

Digitized by Google

MacNeil's armor of dislike by means of that same exhibition. There was something pathetic in the youngster feeling himself a failure in his own outfit over such a trivial thing as that combat, and his pitiful attempts to talk himself back into his own self-esteem over at the club were tell-tale indications of his youth and inexperience. Defeat comes hard to all but those who know life well enough to know that it is the fight that counts most, and not the result.

So Broughton, with some hesitation, had gambled on MacNeil and approached him a couple of days before their take-off for Blaney.

"Snapper, the captain is going to have you give the stunt exhibitions up there in the Fokker," he said.

MacNeil could not hide the sudden exultation which flooded him, but all he said was:

"All right. It's O.K. with me."

Jim indulged in considerable mental mirth at the affected nonchalance in MacNeil's words.

"You know, Snapper, I was given some training by George Groody, who can stunt more in two minutes than any other flyer I ever saw could in an hour. He put me on to some new stuff that I've never seen anyelse do, and I thought maybe you might like to learn some of it before going to Blaney. How about it?"

MacNeil did not emerge from his aloofness, which had been habitual of late, but he did deign to ask,

"What do you mean?"

"Well, take an upside down roll, for instance. Anybody can do a barrel roll, but in that Fokker out there you can do a roll on your back that will knock them dead up in Blaney. All you've got to do is go into a loop with a lot of speed, and when you get on your back jerk the stick way back and apply full rudder. It's a nasty sensation, but the old Fokker'll just roll right around. It'll take some practise to catch it when it gets around on her back again, so you can then finish a perfect loop with a roll added, but you can do it."

MacNeil was interested. So much so that he temporarily forgot the constant unhappiness which was a result of what he considered to be his lowly position as a flyer in the outfit. It was his greatest ambition to be considered a wonderful airman, and in Broughton's words he glimpsed new vistas in flying which he had never known existed.

They talked on, Broughton explaining the real Immelmann turn, which few flyers do and which bears no resemblance to what most of them think the Immelmann turn is, and then the pièce de résistance of the famous Groody's flying.

"Get on your back and get diving fast. Then go through the procedure I told you about, roll, come out on your back and keep the stick forward. You can do a series of upside-down rolls then, and from that start you can work out some stuff that will be marvelous."

With his face aflame MacNeil had rushed to the hangars and ordered the Fokker on the line. At Broughton's advice he took the little ship a few miles from the field for his practise, and for three hours that day he tried out Broughton's suggestions. Part of the time Broughton, in a De Haviland, watched him and made suggestions after MacNeil had landed.

Broughton's gamble won to a certain extent. MacNeil gave him no evidences of friendship, but there was respect, and no particular dislike, apparently. And the last two days, Broughton reflected with satisfaction as he kept a wary eye on the ship ahead, had been happier for Snapper than any of the hours since his combat defeat. He felt that he had the means in his hand now, to redeem himself as a flyer. He was still actuated by petty jealousy and the disposition indirectly to elevate himself by disparagement of his fellows, but at least his personal antipathy for Broughton himself seemed to be gone.

Broughton considered that the way was opened for him gradually to give to MacNeil some of the knowledge he had gained as a street gamin in El Paso and a rover over the earth. He smiled slightly as he wondered why he should be drawn to the ubiquitous youngster so strongly. Perhaps it was the memory of his own younger days when every man's hand had seemed to be against him.

He leaned far out of the cockpit to look ahead over rolling hills and the railroad which the formation was following. Far in the distance was the blurred panorama of a sizeable town. Broughton had not been paying much attention to his map, but he glanced down at it in the brief intervals he could spare from watching the De

Digitized by Google

Haviland fifty feet in front of him. There was a small stream off to the southward a few miles, with one of its bends particularly sharp and paralleling the railroad in the way it pointed. By this landmark he recognized the town ahead as Blaney.

In a moment the captain, up in the lead, threw out his right arm in the gesture which meant that he was about to turn the formation. Little by little, using rudder only and skidding around, the formation turned behind their leader until they were flying a course which would take them some miles south of Blaney. For a moment Broughton was puzzled, and then remembered that Nolan, who had gone ahead to pick a field, had wired the captain that the only possible landing field was at a hamlet called Kerryville, fifteen miles south of Blaney itself.

Nolan must have been discouraged when he flew around Blaney trying to land, was Broughton's mental remark. The town nestled between encircling hills which, while not very near, were absolutely continuous. There did not look to be a yard of level country within a radius of twenty miles. Such fields as could be seen were small, rough and with washes or ditches in them.

There was a road visible which looked fairly good from three thousand feet, leading in an almost straight line southward from Blaney. In a moment a small settlement came into view behind an unusually high, thickly-wooded mountain. The country grew noticeably wilder and more deserted ten miles from Blaney.

In a moment more Broughton's keen eyes picked up Nolan's ship on the ground. There was a big landing T in the corn-stubble field, which was the only possible landing place in sight. It was rather small and on the side from which they would glide in there was a low hill. The wind must be fairly strong to have Nolan signal them to land over that hill, for the approach on the opposite side was much better—a few trees set wide apart, the road, and a fence. It was a two-way field only—perhaps three hundred yards long and a little less than half as wide.

The road which paralleled the fence on the eastern end of the field, was packed with onlookers on foot or in every conceivable type of vehicle. The captain rocked from side to side, the signal to break formation, and then gave his De Haviland full gun. It sped away from the formation a hundred yards, and then Gobel turned his motor full on and moved into a position directly behind the captain. MacNeil followed Gobel, then Seaton and finally Broughton, until the five ships were spiraling in single file behind their leader.

As they dropped to a thousand feet in wide circles around the field Broughton could see a tiny figure which he judged to be Nolan standing inside the fence, probably to keep the crowd from getting on the field. The five big trucks which had been sent overland from Goddard Field carrying supplies of various kinds were lined up along the long way of the field, on the northern side.

At five hundred feet the captain started flying straight again, looking over the field carefully. It appeared to be smooth and level, without any flaws in it. Careful inspection however, showed a streamer on the end of a pole in the extreme southwest corner, next to the slope of the hill. That meant a soft place there.

The captain resumed his spiral, having flung up a hand to indicate that he was ready to land. The other planes kept circling while the captain turned westward in a slow glide, banking his ship around gradually as he reached a point slightly beyond the mountain. Broughton could see the ship tip up on a wing, and in a steep sideslip drop sideward down the wooded side of the mountain. Flanders landed within a few yards of the edge of the field, and stopped rolling a safe fifty yards from the fence and the massed onlookers. There must be two hundred spectators there, Jim estimated, and at least forty cars ranging from Fords to what looked like substantial limousines. The latter were probably from Blaney.

Gobel ran up fairly near the fence, but ground-looped in plenty of time. Both he and the captain ran their ships off to the northern edge of the field, flanking the trucks.

It was MacNeil's turn to land next, but that young gentleman was now five hunhundred feet higher than he should have been, indulging in graceful wingturns for the benefit of the populace below. It was contrary to all the rules of flying to leave the formation, but apparently Snapper could not resist the temptation to get

Digitized by Google

started on the road to flying stardom among the townsfolk.

Seaton, next in line, landed and then Jim started down. It was child's play to land the Fokker there—with the nose fairly high in the air he stalled the little ship down, parallel to the rather steep slope of the hill, and less than ten feet above the towering tree-tops that clothed the hillside in a riot of Autumn color. He used less than half the field for his landing—the light little ship dropped the last five feet almost straight down while Broughton held the stick clamped back tight against the seat. It hit on three points, and the upward grade which he had guessed he would find, plus a steady eastward wind, stopped him quickly.

A Fokker is tricky on the ground, for a rigid tailskid makes it hard to turn, or to stop turning when once it starts. Consequently Gilson and Godwin, two of the sergeants who had come through with the trucks, ran out to each take a wing and help Broughton turn. As he taxied over to the edge of the field a look upward showed him MacNeil on the way down. He was diving low at the crowd banked along the road, and before he had covered the distance across them was down to barely three feet over the wires along the thoroughfare. Jim grinned at the fussed people, some of whom fell flat on their faces in fear of the roaring plane above them, while at the same time he cursed the foolish chance MacNeil was taking. Where would he be if his motor cut out so low—and why could he never learn to subordinate his personal glory to the discipline of the outfit?

"Kid stuff," thought Broughton as he let the motor idle for a moment before cutting the switches. A Mercedes will backfire if the gas is run out of the motor.

In a moment he switched off the magneto levers, and pushed up his goggles. With the Mercedes cut off the roar of MacNeil's racing Liberty became a deep bass drone, which flung back from the close-rising mountains, seemed to fill the air with an all-pervading hum. The De Haviland was low over the hill-top now, and suddenly the noise of the motor was so reduced that it was subordinate to the whine of the wires as MacNeil cut it and started a fast dive.

Jim wondered what stunt MacNeil was planning to try now. That De Haviland was diving for the small field at a hundred and twenty miles an hour, and at that rate would overshoot it by a hundred yards.

Fifty feet from the ground the big ship tilted steeply, nose in the air. It seemed to hang there a moment, and then started dropping, wing down. At the last moment Snapper brought it level, a foot above the ground. It had almost lost forward speed when he pulled up, so that it hit the ground well back. It was a very pretty piece of flying, and likewise very useless.

Broughton unloosened his belt and started to climb out of the cockpit. As he stood up there was a startled exclamation from Gilson, who had been watching the D. H. as he stood beside the Fokker wing. Broughton turned to look and as his eyes took in the scene before him his big hand closed like a vise around the leather edge of the cockpit.

There MacNeil's plane was trundling over the ground at perhaps twenty miles an hour, seventy-five yards from the fence. A few yards in front of it a little girl was running diagonally across the end of the field, bound for the ships drawn up along the side. Behind her the big figure of Nolan was bounding along with great strides that ate up the distance, but instinctively Broughton knew that Nolan could not save her.

Two seconds that seemed like years, and the ship struck the running girl. The propellor burst into splinters, and with a racing engine the wheels of the De Haviland ground the mangled little child into the ground. The axle bar, low to the ground, met the prostrate figure and the ship slowly nosed over, perhaps forty yards from the milling crowd. Women's shrieks rent the air, and a resistless tide of men swept over the fence and toward the ship.

Broughton found himself running, without conscious volition on his part. MacNeil was climbing out of the cockpit—Sergeant O'Flynn was already out. Broughton realized that MacNeil, with that tremendous motor cutting off all view straight ahead, did not know why he had nosed over. When he had leaped to the ground however, he did see. Broughton saw him stop as though he had been shot, and then drop to the ground alongside the ship.

Captain Flanders and Gobel had reached the wreck before Broughton, and little Seaton arrived along with Broughton and all the mechanics.

Digitized by Google

"Get in a ring around the nose—don't let them see it!" the captain was shouting above the clamor of hysterical women and many sobbing men.

Flanders' face was ashen, his black eyes gleaming from their sockets and his mouth set. Jim saw why—there was nothing but a crimson, unrecognizable heap of flesh smeared on the wide wooden axle-guards. MacNeil, head in his arms, was lying face down on the ground. His body quivered with racking sobs.

"Stand back!" yelled the captain, as the flyers, gathering closely around the gruesome sight, shoved and pushed the motley crowd that were pressed against them by those behind.

"Stand back ——!"

A lanky man of middle age, with a long tobacco-stained mustache and the eyes of a maniac, swung on the captain and knocked him down. Before any one could interfere he was on the ground, attempting to pick up the broken little body. A dishevelled woman with care-worn face that was now like death itself, broke through after him, and as she dropped to her knees, scream after scream came from her ashen lips.

It was as though all excitement quieted in an instant, and nothing but horror remained. Absolute silence, save quietly sobbing women in the background and those screams.

Broughton dropped to his knees beside MacNeil. One steady hand gripped the young flyer's shoulder in wordless sympathy. The girl's death was no more Snapper's fault than if he had been a thousand miles away—a rolling ship is the most nearly uncontrollable thing that moves, and undoubtedly he had never even seen the girl. Big Bob Nolan, his face working pitifully, dropped down beside Broughton and MacNeil.

"I was doing my ——est to keep the crowd back," he murmured, half to himself, half to MacNeil.

The crowd, now silent, no longer pressed close to the ship, but stood back respectfully. Three women, one of them tottering with age had gathered around the screaming mother. Four roughly dressed mountaineers went about the task of collecting the gruesome remains. Flanders, whose nose was bleeding profusely from the crazed man's blow, stripped off his leather coat and offered it to one of the men to carry the body in.

The man took it, looked at the captain for an instant, and then without a word slammed it to the ground and turned away.

Broughton's fist clenched at his side as he watched. Flanders seemed about to leap forward, but then his arm dropped to his side and he turned away.

All the airmen gathered around MacNeil and stood silently watching the little knot of people gathered about the ship. The mother had fainted as the men gathered up the body, and now only soft sobbing and occasional whispered words broke the absolute stillness. The spectators formed a long line a few yards away, facing the ship and the flyers.

In a moment they parted to allow a silent procession to pass to the road. Two of the men carried the body wrapped in a coat. Blood was oozing through the fabric already. They got into two battered Fords and started toward the little settlement half a mile away.

MacNeil had not lifted his face from the ground, but his sobbing had ceased. The other men were depressed and sorrowful, their faces showed the strain they were under. Not a man of them but had faced death dozens of times, and all had seen many of their brother officers crash to their deaths, but there is something about the death of an outsider that has the power to break a flyer. Many a seasoned pilot has quit the game entirely because his machine over-ran a field or crashed into a crowd.

The tension broke somewhat, and two well-dressed men of middle age came toward the flyers.

"Captain Flanders, meet Mr. Sutton and Mr. Day. Mr. Sutton is Mayor of Blaney," said Nolan.

"I'm glad to know you both," the captain said quietly. "I'm sorry that our début in your part of the country has been so tragic."

"Horrible, horrible," agreed Sutton, his ruddy, full face wearing a look of solemnity, which appeared to be an unaccustomed expression. His bushy black eyebrows shaded eyes which were surrounded with tiny crinkles, and his generous mouth strengthened the impression of geniality about him.

He and Day, a gaunt man wearing shell-rimmed glasses, glanced down at MacNeil.

"I can't see that any of you boys were to blame at all," he said. "Nolan here warned everybody repeatedly, and the little

Digitized by Google

girl just skipped away from her folks, I guess."

Flanders shook his head.

"They will do it," he returned absently, his eyes on the crowd which was now gathered close around, looking at the nosed-up ship or trying to hear the conversation between the flyers and the two Blaney men. The majority of people appeared to be from Blaney, for they were a well-dressed crowd with only a sprinkling of the overalled, slouch-hatted mountaineers, who had been present a few moments before.

"Well, captain, it's a tragic thing, but I hope we can all forget it far enough to make your stay in Blaney a pleasant one. We're tickled to death to have you come. Day here is an ex-major in the engineers, and I've got a boy over at Centre, who was in the Army a long time."

"Thank you, Mr. Sutton, we all appreciate that."

"I'm speaking for the town when I say you're welcome, too," the mayor went on. "And we're not cooling down any on account of the tragedy that just took place."

His last words were purposely loud, and there was a murmur of assent from the gathering. MacNeil sat up and then got to his feet slowly. His face was white beneath the freckles, and there was a drawn look about his sunken eyes, but he did not show any other signs of his ordeal.

The fact that many curious eyes were on him did not seem to impress him at all. He took out a cigaret with a none too steady hand and turned to the quiet Broughton.

"Match?" he asked.

Broughton gave him one, watching him closely.

"Standing it like a thoroughbred," he opined to himself.

"Snapper, meet Mr. Sutton and Mr. Day," said the captain.

Both men gave MacNeil's hand a strong grip, their faces sympathetic as they looked into the boyish face that was now so old and haggard. His eyes grew wet at their friendly words, and he turned away for a moment.

"Sorry, but I'm a little unstrung," he remarked with a quivery smile.

"Don't blame you," said Day.

"Captain, before we leave for Blaney let's all get to one side and have a little confab," said Sutton.

He led the way toward the side of the field, all the flyers following him. Mechanics gathered around the ship, and one of them threw a noose of heavy rope around the tail which was sticking almost straight up in the air. By this means they got it back on an even keel and started to inspect the damage. Most of the crowd filtered back toward the road.

"Captain, this accident may have been an unfortunate one in more ways than you might think," Sutton began abruptly. "This little hamlet here, Kerryville, is named after the Kerrys and no one but Kerrys and their kinsfolk live here. You've heard about them maybe—three years ago they killed five of the Wellers in a feud fight not ten miles from here. They're a wild, untamed lot—moonshiners, mostly. These hills back here are alive with their stills.

"They stick together like glue—live out here by themselves and they're bad to cross. A number of revenue agents know that. The thing has gotten to the point where the county authorities sort of leave them alone as long as they don't bother anybody on the outside. I will say for them that of late they haven't started anything—as long as they can make their 'shine and sell it they're all right.

"But I know what they are when they're roused. You noticed their attitude out here, didn't you?"

"Slamming the captain's coat down, for instance," said Gobel.

He was a tall, sandy-haired fellow with a lot of common sense and the ability to take in a great deal while saying very little.

"Yes. I don't know whether Nolan told you about it or not, but at first we in Blaney were a little doubtful about the advisability of you fellows landing here—thought the Kerrys might get some fool ideas in their heads because you were Government men and they might figure that you were here for some ulterior purpose. Unless I've lived in Kentucky all my life for nothing, I'll bet that this whole village is inflamed against you fellows this minute."

The captain shook his head and started pacing up and down slowly. In a few seconds he stopped and announced his decision.

"We'll call off all recruiting until after the funeral," he stated. "We'll leave a guard around the ships at all times. I'll

Digitized by Google

do my best to square things with the folks, and I want every man here in the outfit to understand that we've got to tread a chalk line in our relationships with these people as long as we're here."

"I noticed you gracefully accept a punch in the nose," grinned dapper little Seaton.

"The captain's right, I believe," said Day, lighting a tremendously long and thin cigar. "As Sut here says, they're probably in a mood where a little match would start a big explosion. I wouldn't mix with 'em at all. They figure MacNeil here as being blamable for the accident—all that playing around he did will strengthen their ignorant minds in the belief that it was trick flying of some kind that was responsible for the little girl getting killed. But as long as your outfit stays by itself out here, and you fellows stay in Blaney except for coming out to fly, why I believe things will be all right."

"I'd like to call and express the sympathy of the detachment," said the captain.

"I don't know whether that would be wise or not," returned Sutton slowly.

"It might do some good— I'll tell you, it might work out all right for us to take him to see old Bill Kerry and talk it over with him. He sort of rules the place here, Flanders, on account of being head of the clan and his reputation as the worst killer Kentucky ever had in its feuds—right up alongside of Hatfield and those old boys."

"I never thought of that," said Sutton, nodding his agreement with Day's words. "Old 'Wild Bill' killed twelve men in three weeks here a few years ago, and they had to get the militia of the state out in the mountains to catch him. Then they didn't catch him, but he walked into a camp and surrendered. He only got five years—the right party was in power. But the old scoundrel has got a lot of sense and he's really settled down now. If you can talk him into being your friend, or at least not an enemy, why it'll help a lot."

"Then lie low and do nothing to start anything," nodded the captain. "I'll get the whole outfit together and give instructions now."

Nolan and Gobel sent sergeants out to collect the fifteen men who had come by truck. Broughton was keeping an eye on MacNeil while listening to the conversation. Snapper was pronouncedly nervous. He wandered around a good deal, and smoked cigaret after cigaret. His eyes were on the ground most of the time, and it was plain to be seen that he was under a terrific strain.

When the men had gathered, the captain briefly told them the situation.

"Any man who disobeys my orders in the slightest degree will get the limit," he concluded. "There will be nothing done until after the funeral so far as recruiting goes, and you will all stay out here in camp. You may hear some hard things said about us by these townspeople, but do not resent them. Keep by yourselves. There will be an officer here at all times as officer of the day, and you will get his permission before going to town. You will only go into Kerryville when it is absolutely necessary. It'll be a monotonous two or three days, but after that most of you will be in Blaney and Mr. Sutton here, who is mayor of Blaney, has promised us a good time. That's all."

GOBEL was left with the men to supervize the erection of tents and the repair of the wrecked De Haviland. The remaining officers, with Mr. Sutton and Day, started for Kerryville. They decided to walk, leaving the two big cars which the Blaney men had brought standing by the field. Every one seemed to feel that a little exercise would do him good—the captain particularly felt as if he'd like to work himself into exhaustion.

He was of the eager, aggressive type of army officer, and the events of the afternoon put him in a difficult position, both personally and officially. His responsibility as commanding officer weighed on him heavily, and he was almost as nervous as McNeil as they started for town. He vetoed the idea of riding and led the way with long strides which made the two civilians puff to keep up with him.

Kerryville proved to be thirty or forty buildings all of which were built alongside the road. There were two small, seedy-looking stores, a number of barns, and not a single really large house. Two or three of the dwellings showed some signs of care, but most of them were badly in need of paint. A considerable proportion of them would not have been inaptly described by the name shack.

As the group of airmen passed the first store the little knot of loafers around the place looked at them with far from pleasant

Digitized by Google

countenances. There were muttered words which the flyers could not hear, but the feeling in them could be plainly gaged by the faces. They gave no sign that they had noticed the hostile attitude of the townsmen, but walked on swiftly, Captain Flanders and Sutton leading the way.

They had not gotten more than twenty feet past the store when the high-pitched drawl of one of the men behind reached their ears.

"That's him—the red-headed ——!"

That instant McNeil broke under the strain. Broughton was walking beside him, but had no opportunity to stop him. Snapper turned like a flash and ran back toward the group of Kentuckians. Broughton was after him in a moment, but he was too late.

A tall, lanky young mountaineer dressed in a battered felt hat and a black sateen shirt tucked into overalls, gave himself away by involuntarily shrinking away from the oncoming MacNeil. The flyer's face was contorted with rage, and every lineament of it expressed the almost maniacal rage which temporarily made him irresponsible.

He was a foot shorter and at least twenty pounds lighter than his adversary, but he leaped on the man like a wildcat. The force of his rush, combined with a straight smash with every ounce in Snapper's body behind it sent the big fellow to the ground like a felled ox. In the seconds which elapsed before the arrival of Broughton and the rest of the Army men Snapper simply sailed into every man within his reach.

There were a half-dozen men in the group, and for a moment the sudden onslaught of the blazing MacNeil caught them so by surprize that they seemed incapable of movement. MacNeil was like a bundle of concentrated ferocity. He sent two more men to earth before the others started in on him.

Jim was just in time to fell a stout, middle-aged man who had drawn back his heavily booted foot for a kick at Snapper, whose back was toward him while he fought off two others. Jim, having sent the man to the ground with a solid blow behind the ear, grasped MacNeil from behind, lifted him bodily and threw him against the side of the store.

The lanky young fellow who had been the first to feel the weight of MacNeil's fist started after him, and Snapper was nothing loath. With his lips twisted into a snarl he leaped forward. Jim got between them and hurled the mountaineer back.

"Stay where you are, —— you!" he shouted.

The arrival of the other Army men made the Kerryville representatives take a second thought about resuming the fight. Captain Flanders, with his black eyes flashing, turned on the suddenly silent aggregation. A few curious children and one or two women peeking out the small-paned store window were the only onlookers. Every one else, it developed later, was at the home of the girl who had been killed.

"Who said 'that red-headed ——'?" demanded the captain, taking a menacing step toward the group.

Silence. One or two of them shifted slightly, and only one pair of eyes met the captain's piercing gaze.

"Well, it doesn't matter. But let me tell you this, and you might as well understand it. We are sorrier than we can tell you about the death of the little girl, but not a man here is to blame for it in the slightest. And from now on it'll go hard if any person in this town takes it upon himself to indulge in anything similar to the dirty insult which has just been spoken to Lieutenant MacNeil. You're talking now to the United States Army, and if it's necessary there'll be enough of that Army brought here to see that the uniform is treated with the respect it deserves. Do you understand that?"

Most of the Kerryville men were young, and all of them dressed roughly. They were impressed by the menace in the captain's every word, and awed by the array of uniformed, stalwart young men behind him. They said absolutely nothing.

The captain turned and started up the street again, the others following. After going far enough to get out of earshot of the Kerryville men he stopped.

"MacNeil, once again you've made an ass of yourself," he said with his eyes fixed unwaveringly on his junior. "You've forced me to put ourselves into a position of armed truce at the best. Didn't I tell you that to save complications we must all pipe down the first two days? These people are in the first reaction to what has happened—give them a day or two with nothing further to arouse them and they might settle down and give us no trouble. Now we are their enemies definitely, unless I've misread the character of the people around here."

Digitized by Google

"You're right," agreed Day, tapping his cigar nervously with a long finger. "The clan spirit is strong—this fight will be all over Kerryville in ten minutes and your names will be anathema to every person in town."

MacNeil said nothing. Apparently the fit of rage was over, for his face looked more normal than it had since the accident. He took the captain's biting words silently, eyes on the ground. Broughton could not help but agree with the captain.

"There's only one bright spot," said Sutton in an attempt to smooth things over. "These people are bound to have a lot of respect for the United States Army. I don't believe that on a showdown they would dare to do a thing—not at all openly, at any rate—to really harm you fellows. If you had not been in uniform I'll venture to say that half of you would be dead this minute. Fights with the Kerrys aren't finished with fists."

"Well, let's go on and see what we can do with this old Bill Kerry," said the captain, and started immediately. The strain of the recent happenings was telling on him—truly the recruiting trip of his outfit was starting far from auspiciously.

"Snapper, that was a hard thing to take back there, but you sure did make a complete fool of yourself," Broughton said as they walked along the narrow dirt path which took the place of a sidewalk.

"Well, is it any of your business?" flashed MacNeil, his face sullen.

"You're —— right it is, and the business of every man in the outfit," returned Broughton sharply. "Your kid stuff has put every one of us in wrong, and it's liable to cause every one of us a lot of trouble."

"Afraid again, I suppose," sneered MacNeil.

Jim's hand clenched slowly at his side, and then as slowly loosened. He remembered the strain MacNeil had been under, and the memories which would throng his mind to his dying day, probably.

"Snapper, I wish you could get it into your head that we're all your friends, and that what I'm saying is purely in a friendly spirit. Why in the name of Heaven can't you learn to forget yourself, and your own desires, for the good of the outfit and for your own sake in a professional way?"

But MacNeil was in no humor to accept Broughton's criticism.

He knew as well as the others how foolishly he had acted, but the natural combativeness and conceit in his makeup prevented him from admitting it. As he walked down the ugly street he had almost forgotten the recent accident in his sullen brooding. The captain's call-down before Sutton and Day remained in his memory—he could not bear to be humiliated in any way.

He knew it was justified, and as usually happens when a man knows at heart he is wrong and persists in his course, his chagrin became greater and greater. Once again he felt like a pariah. The death of the little girl was like some ever-present shadow in his mind and the events of the last few minutes, added to the accident, put him in a dangerous state of bitterness and self-pity.

Broughton, reading Snapper's thoughts almost as clearly as though MacNeil had given utterance to them, went ahead with the captain just as the little cavalcade rounded a gradual turn in the village street and came in sight of a small crowd of people and many vehicles in front of a house. Most of the townspeople were there it seemed, for only two or three had been seen during the walk up the street, except the loafers around the store.

"Harry, I believe Snapper deserved all he got, and more maybe, but you know how he is. He's in a state of mind where he's liable to do almost anything. I believe it would be a good idea if we all sort of put ourselves out to get him away from himself."

"You're right, Jim, but I'll swear I can't be bothered playing nurse to a kid. He had a horrible accident, and I know it, but for the love of Mike let him take it like a man and live up to his job."

"He's very young, isn't he?" inquired the genial Sutton.

"Twenty-two—got no business in the Air Service unless he can get some sense in his head. He's nervy and game and a nice little chap in a lot of ways, but he's a hard man to handle. He's always doing or saying something I have to sit on him for, and then he gets sore when I bawl him out."

"He'll get over that," said Day. "Well, here we are."

They approached the gathering of people slowly. They were sitting on the porch, standing around on the lawn, and many of them could be seen through the windows. Those in front of the house were mostly men,

Digitized by Google

talking in low tones. The women on the porch were crying. A few battered automobiles were standing in front, but they were outnumbered by horse and mule-drawn conveyances. Several saddled animals were standing at a crude hitching rack in front of a store which was next-door to the house.

"Is this where old man Kerry lives?" asked Broughton.

"No, but it's where he'll be," Day replied. "I'd like to know just how closely related to him the little girl was."

All conversation ceased as the flyers approached. The crudely dressed men looked at them with hard eyes. The thin-faced women paid almost no attention to the strangers.

"Can you tell me whether Mr. William Kerry, senior, is here?" Sutton inquired of a bewhiskered man in a sweat-soaked cotton shirt.

The man spat deliberately before answering. Then he jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

"Inside," he said.

Sutton turned back to the flyers, who were standing somewhat uncertainly a few yards from the house. The Blaney man could hear muttered comments from the onlookers as he walked toward Captain Flanders. A woman's hysterical crying came plainly to the ears of the people outside, and at the sound MacNeil's face went white.

"He's inside," Sutton told them. "I'll swear I don't know whether it will make them mad if we interfere to the extent of asking him to come out——"

"There he is now," interrupted Day, and every one turned toward the house.

Broughton could not repress a grin as he watched the figure before him approach.

The famous old killer was a little man with scraggly, tobacco-stained beard and a face which was covered with tiny wrinkles. Both cheeks were sunken, the skin like leather. The small eyes were surrounded with pouches, and his hair had not been cut for months. His height was little more than five feet, and he walked with his slight shoulders hunched over in what appeared to be a permanent stoop.

Sutton and Day walked a few paces forward. The eyes of the townspeople rested unwaveringly on the sight before them, and Broughton could see meaning looks and low-voiced comment being exchanged.

After a perfunctory greeting Sutton introduced Captain Flanders to Kerry. The old man did not offer his hand, but nodded. He did not seem particularly unfriendly.

"Mr. Kerry, Mr. Sutton has said that you are the most influential man in the town here, and that your word carries weight. After all that happened this afternoon I feel a certain delicacy in intruding on the grief of the poor little girl's family. I did want to convey through you the sincere sorrow which the accident caused us. May I ask whether the girl was a relative of yours?"

"Granddarter," was the equable reply.

The captain said a few more words of sympathy, which the old man took calmly. His bright little eyes darted from face to face before him, and his jaws worked constantly on a huge plug which stretched the skin of his right cheek.

"We also want to tell you that anything in our power we are willing to do. We should be very happy if you would allow us to attend the funeral. I may say that until the funeral we will not go on with the work which brought us here."

"Whut's thet?" inquired Kerry.

"Recruiting. We have no other object in view but the persuading of some young fellows around Blaney to join the Air Service."

Kerry spat deliberately, and took a leisurely backward look which embraced the silent gathering around the house.

"I wouldn't plan on goin' t' the buryin'," he announced.

Jim Broughton, having sized up the old man to his satisfaction, decided to come out into the open.

"Would you mind telling us why?" he asked slowly.

Kerry turned toward him and sized him up with a quick look from his bright little eyes.

"I don't reckon Bide—thet's the girl's father—would want ye," he replied.

"What is your own attitude toward us, Mr. Kerry?" Broughton inquired.

He had a feeling the old feudist before him could be handled directly, and that the more frankly he was approached the more he would tell.

"I kain't say," returned Kerry with the ghost of a smile. "But if I was one o' ye I'd git out o' town."

The flyers exchanged quick glances at the old man's unemotional statement. Mr.

Digitized by Google

Sutton cut into the conversation for the first time.

"Mr. Kerry, as these gentlemen have explained they are here for no purpose other than recruiting. The field here is their only possible landing-place. As an impartial observer, I can assure you that the very tragic death of your little granddaughter was not in these gentlemen's power to prevent. Knowing all this, why should there be feeling against these men in Kerryville?"

"Ye had a fight down the road a piece, didn't ye?" returned the old man.

"Yes, I'm sorry to say. Lieutenant MacNeil here was grossly insulted by one of the townsmen," said Flanders.

"Thet was Lonny Catfield," nodded Kerry. "He's kin to me, and he's bad."

"Coming right out in the open, Mr. Kerry, we wanted to see you for three reasons," said the captain. "First, to express through you our grief and sympathy at the accident. Second, to tell the townsfolk, through you, that we are not here as representatives of the law or for any other purpose but recruiting. Third, to convince you of these things so that you, as the head of your family, can persuade the rest of the town that any feeling against us is unjustified. In other words, we're going to be here for a week and we don't want any trouble. The better we can all get along the more pleasant things will be."

Jim watched the old man's impassive face with a half-smile. There was an underlying spirit about the faded chieftain which appealed to the flyer.

Kerry hitched up his overalls before answering.

"I kain't do much fer ye," he said at length. "Whether ye're right 'r wrong about the killin' I don't know, nor keer much. Lizzie's dead, thet's the main thing. But I know her daddy and some o' the other boys, and I'm tellin' ye to git."

"Why?" asked Sutton.

"Because, right 'r wrong, some of these fellers hate ye. I'm gittin' old and ain't hankerin' fer any trouble, but they're different. Might not come to nothin', but I'm tellin' ye to git. Take those boys ye fit with a while ago—they kain't be held in much less'n they want t' be."

"All right, so be it," was the debonair captain's retort, and his black eyes were flashing angrily. "We're going to stay right here and mind our own business. And Mr. Kerry, it may be a good thing for the people of this town to hear from you that back of us is the power of the United States Army, representing the Federal Government. And it will go hard with anybody from now on who bothers us in the slightest."

The old man chewed phlegmatically.

"Once again let me express our profound sorrow at what has happened. We will take your advice, and thank you for it, insofar as intruding ourselves at the funeral goes. Glad to have met you, Mr. Kerry."

Hostile eyes watched them depart down the dusty street. The old man stood in his tracks for a moment, his eyes never leaving the little cavalcade of khaki-clad, trim-looking Army men and their well-known civilian friends.

Sutton, who was walking beside the captain, was trying to reassure him and calm his anger as they walked.

"The Federal Army will scare these people, I'm sure," he said. "Watch out for underhand work, but I don't anticipate any open vengeance for their fancied wrong. If old Bill can convince them that your mission here has nothing to do with moonshining or getting any of them for past crimes, I think everything will be all right."

IT WAS the afternoon of the third day in Kerryville, and Snapper's tour of duty as O. D. The ships were all in shape, and most of the noncoms and enlisted men who were not in Blaney were lounging in their tents. Snapper was sitting on the fence, brooding. That had been his perennial occupation for the last few days.

The funeral of the deceased girl was being held that afternoon, and on the morrow the flying exhibitions and active recruiting would start. The beginning of the court term and its attendant opportunities had been lost to the flyers because of their inactivity in deference to the child's death, but the amount of interest the handbills containing the program of events had aroused was sufficient to almost guarantee a successful mission.

The exhibitions scheduled for the next day were machine-gun work in the air and formation flying. All but six of the mechanics were over in Blaney with most of the trucks, setting up a radio station and preparing the machine gun target.

Digitized by Google

An undersized youth with a rather sinister cast to his face, due to close-set eyes and a weak chin, shambled toward MacNeil. He had on a tattered straw hat, a celluloid collar, gaudy suspenders over a threadbare white shirt, and "store" trousers. He had the typical look of the more closely inbred descendants of the mountain people.

"Mind if I look around the airyplanes?" he asked MacNeil.

"No, go ahead, but don't touch 'em," returned MacNeil indifferently.

Suspicion on the part of all the flyers had been lulled somewhat by a complete lack of any hostile demonstration on the part of the Kerryville people. Their attitude was hostile, but there was no definite word or action to indicate animosity so great that it would take concrete form.

The bitter MacNeil used this thought to feed the resentment which had filled him ever since the last call-down he had received in front of Mayor Sutton and Mr. Day. That fight had not resulted in any consequences after all, he reflected as he perfunctorily watched the gawky mountaineer walk slowly around the ships. He ought to go around with him, probably, but he could see well enough from where he was.

Before long the Kentuckian came back hesitantly.

"Would ye mind if I peeked inside 'em?" he asked with apparent timidity, his eyes on the ground as though afraid of the army man.

A sharp negative was on MacNeil's tongue when he reflected that he had better not risk alienating the Kerryville people any further. According to the blood-and-thunder stories of Sutton and the rest, the wishy-washy looking young man before him had probably killed a few odd people himself.

"Be —— careful you don't put a foot through a wing of——"

"Nossir. I seed the steps thar to set your feet in."

MacNeil got off his perch and wandered over toward the ships behind his visitor. The mountaineer climbed up on the first one rightly, and leaned far over the cockpit, his back toward the casually watching MacNeil. In a moment he got down and started for the next ship. He went through the same process. He would touch a couple of the instruments tentatively. When he got up on the third De Haviland MacNeil exploded, more as an outlet for his chronic grouch than anything else.

"For the love o' Mike, they're all the same, man!" he said.

His visitor turned for a moment from his observation of the maze of instruments inside.

"I don't know nothin' about 'em, mister," he said apologetically. "Thank ye."

He walked off the field slowly. He had scarcely passed from sight before a middle-aged, mustached man and a lanky young fellow, both dressed in what was apparently their Sunday dress, drove up in a battered Ford and requested permission to have a close look at the ships. MacNeil called Sergeant Rickert and told him to conduct the people around. They made the same request as the first man had about taking a look into the cockpit, and Rickert even helped the younger man into the seat and explained the instruments in detail.

When they had gone MacNeil got to thinking. He should have watched closer himself—there might be a bare chance that some damage had been done to the ships. He called Rickert and told him of his suspicions.

"It's not really a suspicion—I don't believe there's a chance that any one here would know enough about ships to do one harm if they wanted to. But let's make an inspection, anyway."

Rickert was master mechanic of the squadron, and as capable an all-round airplane expert as could be found in a month of Sundays. Together officer and mechanic went over the ships carefully, noting every detail. Control wires and gas lines and all the other paraphernalia were untouched.

"I'll stake my year's pay they're all right," said Rickert confidently.

During the next two hours no less than a dozen men and women had made tours of inspection, not counting the several motor-loads of Blaney people who drove out. MacNeil forgot part of his grudge while explaining things to pretty young women, although every once in a while his happiness was spoiled by wondering whether they had heard of his stinging call-down in the presence of Sutton and Day. Their somewhat awed sympathy for him as the unintentional cause of the little girl's death, however, was very soothing.

The captain and Broughton drove up with a bevy of Blaney débutantes—Broughton was next officer of the day—and MacNeil told them of the number of rustic visitors he had received that day.

Digitized by Google

"I thought it best to relax the rules somewhat in order to avoid offending them, but I ordered Sergeant Rickert to watch every one closely and I personally inspected every ship to make sure no harm had been done," he said pompously.

He was very much aware of the girls and could not forego the temptation to talk importantly.

"That's all right," returned the captain. "Maybe they're getting a little more friendly now that they've had a chance to think things over. Jim, make sure that the ships are warmed and ready to go by nine in the morning, will you? I've got to get back to Blaney to attend to some final details on that dinner tonight at the Y. M. C. A. We want the exhibition to come off promptly at ten in the morning."

"Right," Broughton replied, climbing out of the car. "All ready to go, Snapper?"

MacNeil nodded and got in, glad his lonely tour of duty was over. Blaney was proving to be a most prolific grazing ground for visiting flyers. As the big car sped homeward he lost his brooding sullenness in the delight of conversing somewhat patronizingly, with the rural beauties whose attention was so flattering.

PROMPTLY at nine-thirty all five De Havilands and the Fokker took off for Blaney for the machine gun exhibition. It looked as though all of Kerryville was present. Scarcely had the mechanics started the motors when the townspeople started to arrive like bees flocking around honey. The hills echoed to the din of roaring engines, and clouds of thin dust rose lazily as the whirring propellers sent their terrific wind-blasts backward.

The takeoff was toward the hill, and it was a ticklish job to lift the ships over the crest in the short space available, but it was accomplished without accident. Nolan's ship sputtered for a moment, and his tail-skid was almost scraping the treetops before the Liberty settled into its stride, but the other ships had fifteen feet of clear air between their landing gears and the summit of the mountain. They drew into formation over the field, using the same line-up as on the trip from Goddard Field, and at two thousand feet started across the rolling, thickly wooded fifteen miles to Blaney.

The exhibition was to take place over a small lake a mile outside of the town limits. A rough but navigable dirt road, which skirted a mountainside a few hundred feet above the lake, gave the Blaney people a chance to witness the display, and there were no dwellings near enough to present any opportunity for a stray shot to find a human on the ground. A canvas target, fifty feet square, in the form of a raft, was already afloat on the lake.

Broughton, in the Fokker, was to perform his individual share of the exhibition first. As the formation thundered over the last rise and came in sight of the water he could see a line of cars and people at least a quarter of a mile long occupying the natural grandstand which the road provided. Blaney was certainly proving its interest in the Air Service, he reflected.

Directly over the water Captain Flanders, in the lead, dove out of the formation, and Jim followed him. With Gobel leading, the other four planes drew into formation and went a half-mile north of the lake, where they circled slowly, awaiting the completion of Broughton's performance.

Jim circled three hundred feet above the captain, who had a sergeant in the back seat. He watched the enlisted man closely, and in a moment saw a large toy balloon dart backward in the propeller blast, and then float upward.

With the Mercedes slightly throttled he dived to meet it, circling back of it. When it was a hundred feet above him he pulled out of the dive and used his extra speed to chandelle upward, aiming his ship at the target. He pressed the gun-button on his stick, and the clatter of the machine-gun came dimly to his ears. The balloon disappeared into nothingness.

He demolished five more balloons with equal ease. It was wonderful shooting, for only twice did he use more than one burst to reach his target, and once he shot on his back. The gun, mounted on top of the cowling directly ahead of the cockpit, shot through the propeller by means of a "C. C." gear which synchronized gun and motor. When the sixth balloon was demolished Broughton breathed a sigh of relief. Those gears were highly sensitive things—they had to be to enable a machine-gun to shoot through a propeller whirling fifteen hundred times a minute, and if they ever got out of order it meant a splintered stick. And the ground below did not look very healthy for a ship with no propeller.

Digitized by Google

He sent the Fokker into a steep climb, finally hovering above the lake at three thousand feet to watch the De Havilands perform. The other ships flew back to the lake when the scout started upward, and came into a diamond formation behind Captain Flanders. He led them down to six hundred feet in a gradual spiral. It was a pretty sight to see them hold their positions on the turns—it meant that the planes on the inside of the turn had to throttle considerably and those on the outside increase their speed a great deal, with the dive complicating the operation. They accomplished it without a miss. When they straightened out it looked as though they were circling below the level of the hill-tops.

In a moment they went into single file. Flanders led them back of the hill which the onlookers were occupying, and then headed for the target. By using this approach the people below would be in no danger.

As he cleared the top of the rise he nosed down slightly, increasing the angle of the dive gradually as the ship sped down the slope. As he flashed across the road the De Haviland went into the final maneuver —an almost straight dart downward, pointed at the target. Jim could see that the raft had been hit. The ship pulled out of the dive slowly, and his eyes turned to watch Gobel, next in line, hurtle down the slope.

Flanders' ship was out of sight for a moment as the Fokker tipped up in a bank. When it came level again, Broughton's casual glance downward suddenly became a fixed stare and he leaned forward tensely. The C. O.'s De Haviland, banked steeply, had mushed against the steep slope of the ground at the farther edge of the lake. As Jim watched it turned over on its back, sideward, into the water.

He shoved the stick of his sturdy little singleseater forward until it was against the instrument board, and opened the motor wide. As he watched the troubled water to see whether either of the passengers had emerged to the surface the other ship came into his line of vision. It was floating downward, very close to the towering trees on shore, and there was only a splintered stump where the propeller had been. At the same moment that a man came to the surface of the water the other ship crashed into the trees, and dropped until only the tail was visible, below the level of the highest branches.

The Fokker was only a thousand feet high now. Broughton's placid face was like granite as he tried to watch both wrecks at the same time, and to see whether MacNeil, next in line, was so concentrated on his work that he had not noticed the others. His ship was diving for the shot, apparently. Subconsciously he noted the agitated crowd, and gave silent thanks that as yet the horror of Gobel's ship catching on fire had not been added to the total of accidents.

Both Flanders and the sergeant were all right—they had reached the bank. There was no opportunity to see how Gobel and the mechanic with him had weathered the crash, for the trees were too thick. But what he had instinctively dreaded happened.

MacNeil's D. H. hit the water in a skid, and floated, nose submerged. It was less than a hundred yards from the target. Would Nolan, with that great motor and the upper-center section cutting off most of his vision, fail to see MacNeil? If he shot, some of the bullets would almost certainly find the wrecked ship.

He was skimming the water now, and glanced upward fearfully. But Nolan's ship was not diving for the target, it was spiraling downward, and Seaton was behind him.

A swoop across the wreck in the woods told him nothing. Not a sign of life could he see, but the ship was not afire. Out on the surface of the water Snapper's ship was still afloat, and both he and his mechanic were perched high on the tail, four feet above the water-level.

He banked around and started climbing, headed back for Kerryville. As soon as he had reached a thousand feet he leveled out and with the Mercedes turning up its maximum flew a bee-line for the field.

Eight minutes brought him within a mile of it, and he started his dive. He sideslipped in over the road, skidded, and dropped to earth fifty feet from the fence. Before the ship lost half its speed he risked a groundloop, turning the scout toward the trucks. Only four men had been left at the field, and two of them came running out to help him.

As soon as he had reached the line he cut the switches and vaulted out.

"Three ships crashed over at Blaney," he said quietly. "Crank up the truck with the first-aid stuff in it. Only one man will go—the driver. Hustle!"

Digitized by Google

The last word was like the snap of a whip, contrasting sharply with the restraint of his other words. Without asking any of the questions which rose to their lips the men leaped to do his bidding.

In a few seconds the powerful canvas-topped truck was trembling to the beat of the motor, and the pilot clambered in beside the driver. With cut-out open they rolled swiftly across the field, through the opening in the fence, and then down the road with the chauffeur's foot holding the accelerator to the floor.

Broughton maintained his silence, and the driver, after a few surreptitious glances at him out of the corner of his eye, decided not to start conversation. As they passed through the village, dustclouds billowing up behind, Broughton's steady eyes watched the faces of the people on the street closely. There was no way for them to know what had happened, and yet there was a certain eager interest in the big truck and its passengers which was very obvious. Lounging men pointed at it, and women looked out of windows curiously. The gradually forming theory in his mind was being borne out by the available evidence, so far.

Two miles outside of Blaney he saw the two De Havilands which had escaped the disaster scudding homeward above the hills. As the truck rumbled through the outskirts of town a fast-traveling car coming toward them slowed down.

"Get ready to stop!" yelled the flyer, and the driver eased up obediently.

As the two motors drew abreast he saw that Mr. Day was the only occupant of the other car.

"I was just on my way out there," shouted the bespectacled Kentuckian as his car came to a stop. "Lieutenant Gobel's leg was broken and Sergeant Reade, with him, was killed. The others are all right."

The man's thin face was twitching with excitement, and his eyes gleamed behind the big glasses. For a moment Jim was silent. The driver's low "Good God!" came vaguely to his ears.

"Where are the busted flyers?" Jim inquired gently, his equable manner especially noticeable in comparison with the poorly restrained nervousness of the others.

"Gobel in the hospital, the sergeant at Cory the undertaker's, and the others at the places they're living, getting dry clothes," was the jerky response.

"I'll see Harry Flanders around at Sutton's, then," nodded Broughton.

"Think I'd better go on over and get the other boys?"

"They'd appreciate it, probably. Nolan goes on as O. D. today, but Seaton'll want to come back. So long—see you later."

Both cars jerked forward simultaneously, as though possessed with the spirit of their drivers. Broughton instructed the driver where to go, and in a few moments drew up in front of the mayor's impressive domicile. Apparently every one in town had heard of the accidents, for the Army truck tearing along the streets was the focal point of all eyes, and was oppressed with no traffic regulations whatever.

The distraught captain was striding up and down the drawing room, fuming to the sympathetic mayor and his portly, commonplace wife. He whirled on Broughton as that unexcited young gentleman entered.

"You've heard about Gobel and Reade?" he asked tersely.

"Uh huh. Howdy, folks. Harry, were all three of those props shot off?"

"Absolutely!" replied the captain, his fist landing emphatically on the piano.

"Where's Novmeyer, the armament sergeant?"

"Around at headquarters. Why?"

"Because I know and Novmeyer knows that when those ships left Goddard Field every one of those C. C. gears was in perfect shape. I tested 'em myself."

"I know you did."

The solemn mayor and his wife whose eyes showed signs of weeping, had their eyes on Broughton, sensing some definite idea behind his deliberate words. The stoical pilot had a quieting effect on Flanders, who stopped his pacing and stood facing the man he had known so long and so well.

"Unless Novmeyer has fiddled with them, somebody else has. And Novmeyer hasn't. Three props don't go flooey for nothing."

"Of course. But who?"

"As a detective I'm undoubtedly a good crap-shooter, but I've got an idea to investigate that may tell us just which one of Kerryville's playful citizens did it."

"It must have been one of those visitors yesterday," stormed Flanders. "MacNeil probably let 'em wander all over everything and never kept an eye on 'em. If he did——"

Digitized by Google

"He probably was careless," admitted Broughton absently. "But it don't take but a few seconds for an expert to put one on the blink. Mr. Sutton, where could I find a list of Kerryville men who served in the war?"

"Over at the county building. Why?"

"I'd like to look 'em up and see what they did. I——"

"There's an honor roll for the county there giving all the details about every soldier. I'll take you down. What are you driving at, anyway?"

"I'm aiming to put my finger on the exact man that jimmed those gears, killed Reade and tried to bump off the others. Let's go, eh?"

"How that list will do that I dont' know," said the puzzled mayor as he led the way, followed by Flanders, who was just as much at sea.

The limousine sped townward swiftly, and in five minutes was rolling through the small park which surrounded the county court-house.

The honor roll of Hale County's soldier-heroes was a huge, ornate poster which decorated the entire side-wall of one of the rooms. Hale was a sparsely populated county, so it was natural that less than two hundred names be on the list. Blaney was the only town above a thousand people in the territory.

"Which are the Kerryville men?" enquired Broughton, running his eye over the big sheet.

"The three named Kerry, and two Budwells—Jim and Garford. They're all listed alphabetically."

The Mayor and Flanders read the brief histories of these five men, along with Jim, wondering what he was seeking to find.

"Well?" inquired the captain finally.

"Read that story about Mr. Elijah Kerry once more, and notice that after being drafted into the infantry he finally lit in a machine-gun battalion and then in the 303rd Armament section, attached to the 8th Pursuit Group," said Broughton with a slow smile.

Dawning comprehension in the captain's eyes caused the smile to widen.

"Find Elijah, have Snapper tell us whether he was around yesterday afternoon or not, and we've pretty near found our man, haven't we?" he inquired softly.

He turned to Sutton.

"You see, Mr. Sutton, all three of those gears could not have gone bad unless they'd been tampered with. And the C. C. gear is a —— delicate and complicated piece of machinery. For that reason, nobody but an expert would know what fiddling with it would do, or how to go about it. On the other hand, an expert could jim one up in the twinkle of an eye.

"I knew that all these mountaineers eventually got to be gunmen of some kind during the war—sharpshooters, machine-gun men, and so forth—because they were born with a gun in one hand and a mouthful of bullets. I figured it was an open-and-shut case against some Kerryville man. It ought to be this Kerry boy. If Snapper, after seeing him, identifies him as one of the callers yesterday and it proves that he had the slightest chance to use his knowledge, I think we've got proof enough to go ahead."

The mayor nodded soberly. A group of curious men hovered around the doorway of the room where the men were talking, not quite daring to enter. Sutton lowered his voice.

"You're right, I guess," he admitted, his fleshy face troubled. "I'll swear, this town is feeling as bad as you boys are right now about all this trouble, and the thought of that poor boy Reade—and Gobel—it was horrible this morning, horrible!

"But that's not what I started to say. I just about know you're right—correct down to the name of the man. And that means get him. And capturing him means trouble, for the sheriff won't get him out of Kerryville with a posse and ammunition enough to have won the Civil War."

"We'll help," stated the captain, his black eyes glinting. "When we finally locate the man we'll get him. And we'll get him good!"

"Let's find Snapper," proposed Jim, "And——"

"Wait a few minutes until I hop upstairs to headquarters and call off all activities today as a tribute to Reade. I must arrange to send an escort back with the body, too. I'll be right down."

Recruiting headquarters had been furnished the flyers on one of the upper floors, and the captain made his way toward the stairway rapidly, heedless of the swarming onlookers.

Sutton lighted a cigar and puffed it thoughtfully.

Digitized by Google

"If you're right in your reasoning, Broughton, and the sheriff starts to abstract this boy out of Kerryville, ——'s sure going to be popping!" he stated.

THEY found Snapper MacNeil at the home of Mr. Grady, a leading merchant of Blaney, whose wife Snapper was regaling with a lurid story of recent developements.

When he had ensconced himself in the car and the party had started on their way to Kerryville, the captain, who had been unusually silent for a space, turned to MacNeil, who was in the back seat with Broughton.

"Snapper, did you personally conduct all the visitors around the ships yesterday?" he inquired.

MacNeil, on the alert for any attempt to blame him with the disaster of the morning, leaped to his own defense.

"Absolutely!" he returned with quick truculence. "That is, either I did it or assigned Rickert," he qualified.

"Sure?" persisted the captain quietly, his eyes watching the unfolding road ahead.

Snapper's face began to flush below the freckles.

"Of course I'm sure!" he burst forth vehemently. "If you think——"

"Was there any one who looked over the ships while you were, say, fifteen or twenty feet away?"

The quick reply which rose to MacNeil's lips was frozen as he thought of that first young mountaineer.

"W—well," he faltered. "The first man—I was a little ways away, but——"

The captain turned in his seat and his eyes, slightly sunken from the strain of the ill-fated trip, blazed into his junior's.

"Exactly. What did this man look like?"

Snapper described the young fellow haltingly, conscious that once again he was "in wrong," as he furiously told himself.

"Sounds a lot like 'Lije Kerry, although it might fit one or two other hellions over there," observed Mr. Sutton over his shoulder.

The captain hunched down in his seat wearily. The position of commanding officer of a recruiting party which had already killed a civilian and a mechanic, injured a flyer, and lost three ships completely was far from a pleasant one.

"Why in the world, Snapper, did you take the slightest chance of dirty work?" he asked slowly, apparently more in sorrow than anger.

"How should I know?" blazed the flyer. "I was watching him all the time. I——"

"Don't use that tone to me, sir!" flared the C. O., twisting in his seat until his suddenly fierce eyes burned into MacNeil's.

"It was one chance in a thousand that the man would have any opportunity to get in any funny work, and I know it, but under present conditions, for which you are entirely responsible in most ways, that small chance was too great to take. And I don't want any more of your impertinence when I ask you a question or give you an order. Understand?"

For a moment their eyes locked, then Snapper's fell. Hot tears rose to the surface, and in utter misery he slumped back against the cushions.

"If the man you have described proves to be Elijah Kerry we've got the man who scrambled those C. C. gears," came Broughton's even tones like oil on troubled water. "There was a man of that name who was in an Air Service armament section during the the war. Mr. Sutton will point him out to us, and if he was one of your callers yesterday we've got evidence enough for an arrest, which will give us a chance to third degree or bluff the truth out of him."

"We may not find him," said Sutton, uncomfortable at having been forced to be a bystander at the recent disciplinary outburst. "He's liable to be back in the hills somewhere shoveling the festive mash."

Broughton grinned slowly.

"I wouldn't mind about a pint of the white mule," he informed the party. "Before this trip ends I'm liable to be a hophead."

Flanders laughed and then sobered quickly.

"It sure is a darb," he said, as the car came in sight of Kerryville. "Someway or other the two people killed—the little girl and poor Reade—were such innocent bystanders."

"It's a funny thing, Mr. Sutton, but when any 'expendable pilot' is killed in the Air Service it's looked at, even by his friends, as too bad but partly to be expected," Jim told the mayor. "Whenever one of the boys or a civilian gets it, it seems an awful lot worse, even though we don't know them

Digitized by Google

at all. You see, it's our business to fly, while they——"

"Aren't included," nodded Sutton. "I can see your point. You fellows are in it with your eyes wide open, so to speak. Well, we'll slow down now and see what we can see."

At a snail's pace the car crawled down the street, Sutton's eyes keeping a constant watch. MacNeil was lying back in the seat, silent as the grave, his sullen face displaying no interest whatever in the proceedings.

Sutton stopped in front of one of the stores, where three men whittled and spit tobacco juice in fairly equal measure.

"Morning!" he greeted them cheerfully.

It was returned with fitting reserve, and without cessation of either the tobacco chewing or the carpentry.

"You don't know where I could find Bill Kerry, do you?"

"Huntin'," returned the oldest of the three, lifting his eyes for a moment.

"Maybe Lije or Bide would do. I wanted to arrange to have some seed corn brought over to my house, and I always trade with Bill. Is Lije around? I hate to bother Bide after his bereavement."

The three Kentuckians, who acted as though they were recuperating from some strenuous effort, gave this question due consideration.

"Bide's up thar t' th' house. Lije's huntin'."

"Be back tonight, I suppose."

"Or t'morrer," nodded Sutton's informant.

"Thanks."

The car rolled away. Sutton turned his head and grinned.

"That old scoundrel Bill, and Lije too, are hunting the elusive dollar by running the wherewithal through a still," he said. "We'll have to come back I guess——"

"By Godfrey, there comes Lije now!"

Wandering up the village street came an undersized figure in colorless shirt and tattered khaki trousers, holding a gun in the crook of his arm.

Snapper leaned forward, watching the man closely. A big straw hat, woven coarsely, shaded the youth's face a great deal, but at fifty feet the last doubt left him.

"That's the first man that came out yesterday," he said, and relaxed into the seat again.

Broughton's eyes were glowing softly.

"I guess that settles it," he drawled. "Now let's get the sheriff."

Sutton, without a word, turned the car around and started homeward.

"I wonder whether those fellows in front of the store were lying or whether Lije just happened back?" he asked oratorically. "Either might be the truth."

Conversation was desultory on the way back. MacNeil maintained his sullen aloofness, and vouchsafed not a word. The other men were reasonably busy with their thoughts—the captain of the report he must make immediately to the adjutant general and the camp commander; Broughton of the red-headed young firebrand next to him and his persistent "or'naryness," as the border man expressed it. He wondered whether MacNeil could be saved from himself—whether he had sense enough to want to be. It had been a streak of mighty hard luck for the youngster, made seven-fold more difficult by his own refusal ever to admit he was wrong. He imagined that every man's hand was against him, was Broughton's accurate judgment, and was proceeding to do his best to make his fancied isolation real.

They drew up to the court-house, only to find that the sheriff was gone for the day to bring back a criminal who had been apprehended in Cleary, forty miles away. He would be back that evening.

"I'll pick you gentlemen up at seven thirty and take you around to Watkins' house," offered the mayor.

"Fine. Now I must go up to the office and start the reports and things through," said the captain, and promptly disappeared.

MacNeil refused Broughton's suggestion of a movie, and took himself off in morose silence.

"Too bad," said Sutton, shaking his head.

"He just won't get wise to himself," agreed Jim. "Well, I guess I'll drop over to the hospital and shed a few tears over Gobel."

"A mere broken leg doesn't mean much to a flyer, does it?" inquired Sutton quizzically.

"Oh, it's not as bad as it might be, and then again it's a lot worse than it could be," grinned the pilot. "So long."

MACNEIL did not see fit to join the party that evening, for when the car called at the Gradys' the maid gave them notice that he was off to the movie with his host and hostess and Miss

Digitized by Google

Grady, a saucy Irish damsel who possessed almost as many freckles as the army man.

It was not important that he be present, but instinctively the three other men did not like the idea of his absence without any preliminary notice. It indicated to them all that the best interests of the expedition were not foremost in the young flyer's mind. It had the effect of crystalizing the captain's determination that insofar as Goddard Field and the 87th Squadron were concerned, MacNeil was through.

The sheriff dwelt in a small frame house gleaming whitely against the green of a small lawn. Blaney, while a city, still maintained the aspect of a rambling country town. With the exception of business blocks in the center of town, there were no solidly built stretches, and four-fifths of the business district was confined to two parallel avenues and three or four cross-streets. A majority of the houses, like the sheriff's, were small, well-kept cottages.

"Watkins knows his business, and knows the mountain people," Sutton told them as they started for the house, set well back from the sidewalk. "Whatever suggestions he may have to make will come pretty near to being gospel. He got his training on the Louisville police force, although he was born about thirty miles from here."

Watkins himself opened the door, although the flyers would have scarcely suspected that the short, ludicrously fat man could be the representative of the law in that desolate county had Sutton not performed the introductions immediately. They were ushered into a small parlor with horsehair furniture, crocheted tidies, and humorous old tintypes forming the chief furnishings.

The sheriff appraised his visitors with small, twinkling eyes, set in a face like a ruddy, full moon. One of them winked fleetingly, at times. It took Flanders and Broughton a few moments to size up this individualistic habit of the optic for a nervous ailment. In fact, Jim returned the first one.

"G-glad to know you, gents," said the sheriff in a halting drawl. His voice was deep and throaty. "Set down."

"George, we're here on bad business, I'm afraid," said Sutton, plunging into the matter at hand immediately. "It means that you're got to tie into Kerryville at last."

"Pshaw, ye d-don't say," was the easy reply. "How come?"

"You've heard about those three airplanes going bad out at the lake today, destroying them all, killing one man and breaking another's leg?"

Watkins nodded, sitting motionless with his hands resting on the arms of the huge chair which held his bulk.

"Well, here's what we've found out. Maybe Lieutenant Broughton here had better tell you—he knows more about the technical end of things than I do."

Watkins' bright little eyes roved to Jim, who immediately started a brief, straightforward statement of the facts. He mentioned how impossible it would be for any one who was not an expert in such matters to have tampered with the C. C. gears, and what they had discovered about Lije Kerry.

"Of course, two ships being under water and the third cracked into sawdust, we can't prove just what he did to them, but as something of an armament man myself I have a good idea," he concluded. "What we believe is this—that Lije Kerry tampered with them, that the other visitors were merely a blind to make it impossible, as they thought, to pin the crime on any individual, and that the combined facts of his knowing aerial armament, having been around the ships, and then the ships themselves acting as they did make suitable cases for arrest and at least an attempt to extort a confession. What do you think?"

Watkins considered this query leisurely.

"I hate to say it, but I think you're right," he drawled, his fat face wrinkling humorously.

"I don't envy you your job," stated Sutton.

"It's like to be tol'able delicate," admitted the sheriff.

He shifted his mammoth bulk slightly and raised his eyes to the ceiling.

"It was bound to come sooner or later," he opined equably. "That thar Kerryville is a cancer on the face o' the earth, and I know it and everybody knows it. Some of 'em's not so bad, but a lot of 'em are snakes. It's been a case o' not attemptin' to do somethin' we knew we couldn't do, see? If you gave me two thousand men fer a year, I couldn't clean the 'shiners out o' Hale County—how in ——'s a man goin' t' find all the hidden stills in them mountains, clean 'em, and then keep on findin' em in new places?

"And lately that's all they been doin',

Digitized by Google

but o' course we can't let nothin' like this git by. It's their first outbreak, really, in nigh onto three years."

His husky tones ceased, and he appeared to be ruminating placidly. Broughton liked the calm old mountaineer tremendously. He had an idea that once his mighty frame started on a hunt he would be a hard man to stop.

"How many people know about your suspicionin' Lije?" he asked presently.

"Only the three of us here, and Lieutenant MacNeil, who identified him as one of the people who had been around the ships yesterday."

" 'Spose ye could see t-to it that there don't nobody else git to know?"

"I guess we can all keep a secret," smiled the captain. "In fact, we had an idea the fewer in the thing the better."

"C-correct," smiled the sheriff, folding his hands over the rounded expanse of his stomach. "Then we'll just set a day or two, so's any idee they get over thar in ——'s Halfacre regardin' steps o' retaliation 'll kind o' be lulled, and then I'll mosey over thar, sneak up on Lije from behind, and see whut I can d-do."

"Don't want any of our help, eh?" inquired the captain.

"No. Ye see, practically the hull o' Kerryville 'd fight if they knowed. Nobody'd git out o' thar alive, and then the hull town—menfolks, that is—would scatter in the hills and there wouldn't none of 'em be caught 'cept by accident. So I'd appreciate it, gents, if ye'd k-keep a close mouth."

"That's the least we can do for you," declared Sutton. "Thanks, George. We'll leave the whole thing up to you. If there is anything we can do, however——"

"The more help the more trouble," chuckled the sheriff, his body shaking like jelly. "Good-night, gents."

"Well, I hope it turns out to be as much of a picnic as he seems to think," laughed Jim as they got into the car.

"George don't worry much," Sutton told them. "He saves all his energy for the job itself. Which is a pretty good way, after all."

THE sheriff waited two days before taking any steps to apprehend young Kerry, ajudging that length of time necessary for the lulling of any suspicious watchfulness.

Those days were full ones for the Army men. Snapper gave his acrobatic exhibition on the first day, to the amazement of the town and his own great personal satisfaction. The sensation that his upside-down work created helped him to forget, to a certain extent, his position among his fellows.

That his exile was a more or less self-made affair he refused to admit. He had brooded self-pityingly until he had worked himself into the belief that through jealousy or otherwise every man's hand was against him, and that they were all on the alert to blame their troubles on him. In every smile he saw veiled contempt; in the slightest of chaffing remarks he read something derogatory to himself and his ability. Consequently he kept by himself a great deal, and swaggered around in a studied attempt to show everybody that his opinions mattered not to him, Snapper MacNeil. When he became the town-talk through his acrobatic exhibition, thanks to Jim Broughton's coaching, this spirit in him was intensified. He had won back some measure of self-esteem, and felt that at last he was in a position to stand by himself in the eyes of Blaney.

Inevitably the other airmen felt this spirit of bravado, and Snapper was rapidly succeeding in making himself as real a pariah as his imagination had already constructed.

"MacNeil's foolishness is getting pretty old to me," stated Bob Nolan judicially, and every one agreed with him.

The captain's resolution that the youngster must be got rid of was strengthened by almost every word and action of MacNeil's during those days. He was belligerent, moody, disagreeable, self-satisfied.

Aside from personal relationships with Snapper, the recruiting party seemed to have struck a period of smooth sailing, and gratifying success was their portion. Blaney turned out for the flying exhibitions, and hundreds of people exclaimed in astonishment when, gathered in the town square, they heard the buzz of radio received from the ship and then heard Captain Flanders, at the wireless telephone, direct the movements of a ship three thousand feet in the air.

The tanned, clear-eyed enlisted men mixed around with the men of the town, their quartet sang at the Rotary Club luncheon, and at noon-meetings and other places their straightforward talk about the

Digitized by Google

satisfaction a red-blooded young man who wanted to learn a new profession, could find in the Air Service found ready response. Recruits were coming in a steadily increasing stream.

Only Captain Flanders, Broughton and MacNeil knew of the clue which had turned up regarding the wrecked ships, and they waited as patiently as might be for the slow-moving sheriff to take action. Both Broughton and Flanders had sternly impressed upon MacNeil the necessity of strict secrecy, for both realized what an almost irresistible temptation to Snapper it would be to spread a new sensation like that around the town.

Finally Sutton told them that the sheriff, with two deputies, had started for Kerryville to round up Lije. MacNeil was officer of the day—due to Gobel's injury, and the captain's exemption from tour of duty, the O. D. assignment came frequently.

"George'll be moseying in quietly and peacefully in a few hours," the mayor assured them, his round face beaming jovially.

Meanwhile Watkins was doing his best to attain to his desire with as much quietude and peace as the law allowed. His two deputies he left parked in some woods a mile outside of Kerryville, close to the main road. They were to function as body-guards after the bagging of the game.

The sheriff, astride his deliberate mount "Alexander," then took his way into the woods. He detoured Kerryville, working higher and higher up along the mountain as he went. There was but one small still on that mountain—most of them were farther back in the woods. The sheriff took care not to get near that still, although he was well-known and felt reasonably sure that he would not be the recipient of a bullet unless he first carelessly committed some act. However, he was not at all anxious that his secretive presence become known to any resident of Kerryville before the task in hand was accomplished.

It was only two hours after dawn when Watkins finally reached a point of vantage where his eyes could sweep the straggling, ugly village below. He tied Alexander, lighted his pipe, and drew forth a pair of battered field glasses. Any figure appearing on the street below was the target for his glasses. He kept a special watch on Bide Kerry's house, the one-time home of the little girl-victim of MacNeil's plane. Lije, a younger brother of Bide's, lived there.

It was a reasonably certain chance that sooner or later Lije would wander away from town, bound either on a hunting trip or to take his trick at a still. And Watkins had no mind to beard the lions in their den if there was a chance of catching them on neutral territory, for the mountaineer believes that the first principle of safety is keeping outside the hands of the law. His resistance slumps when once the dreaded "gover'mint" has him in its clutches. When he plays poker he prefers to fight it out before the draw, mostly.

It was a little after ten o'clock when Watkins finally discerned the tall, stooping figure of Bide Kerry and the stunted form of the younger man emerge from the house and slouch down the street. They carried rifles slung under their arms, and proceeded leisurely. A little way outside of town they turned from the road and struck up a foot-path. Trees made the sheriff's surveillance only periodic for the next few minutes, but he soon made sure of their route. This being determined, he mounted Alexander and started briskly to cut them off.

He crossed the dim trail they were following in a few moments, and hid the horse in the bushes. He took up his post behind two close-growing trees, and waited impassively, easing the strain on his trunk-like legs by sitting on a rock.

In a few moments the two men, Bide leading, came into view fifty yards ahead. Watkins waited until they had reduced the distance by half, and then stepped from his covert with cat-like quickness. Two pistols covered the slack-jawed mountaineers.

"Drop them guns, and throw up yer hands!" he commanded, his little eyes boring into the elder Kerry's unflinchingly.

It was a tribute to the sheriff's reputation for determination plus straight shooting that the two rifles fell to the ground promptly.

"Lije, I want you fur tamperin' with the machine-gun gearin' on them Gover'mint airyplanes, thereby causin' the death o' one man and —— near of the hull lot of 'em," he announced calmly as he walked toward his captives.

"Whut d'ye mean?" asked Bide hoarsely.

His brother's eyes darted around like a cornered beast's. To the keen-eyed sheriff the man was definitely branded guilty by his own actions.

Digitized by Google

"Jest whut I say," he answered, keeping his men covered as he kicked the rifles one side.

"Ye ain't got no evidence!" Lije burst forth, his face white. "We'll git ye fur this! I ain't——"

"Ye'll find out all about evidence up to Blaney. We just been waitin' to git ye because we didn't want no trouble. Ye was seen tamperin' with 'em that day ye visited the ships, and ye're the only man in the mountains knows anything about them things. Stand back, Lije, and keep yer hands up!"

The younger man's eyes were craven as he obediently backed a few paces, but in Bide's there raged a terrible wrath. He stood wordless, shaking a trifle as Watkins quickly stripped his pockets of shells.

"Now change places boys, while I search Lije," ordered Watkins.

With gun in his prisoner's side and his watchful eyes darting often to the silent brother the sheriff extracted all the shells from Lije's pockets. He then ejected the shells from the rifles.

"Bide, ye can go and take the two rifles," he said. "And listen. I got Lije this way when I could o' sent a gang o' deputies right to the house, and probably shot it out with half o' Kerryville. Then ye'd all been in trouble, and as man to man ye can take it as gospel that after any more gun fights with you Kerrys there ain't goin' t' be any more Kerryville. I got some deputies down the line a ways to help me take Lije t' Blaney. Bide, don't you git no fool ideas in yer head and git up a gang to git Lije back. If ye do—ye'll be through for good. Come on, Lije."

Without a word the tall, stooping Bide Kerry picked up the guns and disappeared down the trail at a loose-jointed run.

Watkins mounted, and wheeled Alexander around.

"Walk ahead, Lije, and walk fast, straight along the side o' the hill. And I don't need t' remind ye that I'll shoot at the first crooked move ye make. Git along!"

Watkins unslung the rifle he had strapped to his saddle and carried it as they proceeded back to the rendezvous. Once or twice Lije looked back, to meet the inscrutable gaze of the huge officer.

A half-mile from the place where the two deputies were waiting the young Kentuckian screwed up his courage to the point where he risked an attempt to escape. The woodgrowth was particularly thick—luxuriantly growing bushes came to a man's shoulders, and at frequent intervals through the undergrowth sturdy tree trunks, bearing the branches which kept all but a few splotches of sunlight from the ground, provided possible shelter from bullets.

Had the seemingly drowzy Watkins not been as alert as a stalking tiger the lightning-like leap which Kerry made, sideward into the thicker undergrowth, would have caught him by surprize. As it was, there was scarcely a split-second between the break for freedom and the crack of the rifle.

As Lije staggered and spun half-around the big sheriff landed on the ground and pounced on his prisoner. He had not shot to kill, but the shoulder-shot was enough.

He threw his gun to the ground and grasped the mountaineer.

"Now why did ye go fer t' do thet?" he grumbled.

Kerry lay quietly, his sinister-looking eyes half-closed, as the sheriff bound his wound with a handkerchief.

He helped Lije to his feet, and gave him a leg up on the horse.

"Walk him slow, Lije, so's I can keep up without puffin'," he directed. "Next time it won't be no shoulder wound ye'll git. If I wasn't a soft-hearted old fool ye'd be buzzard food this minute."

The Kentuckian's body slumped hopelessly in the saddle as Alexander picked his way along the slope. Watkins, the sweat glistening on his fat face, lumbered along behind, the ever ready rifle in the crook of his elbow.

Through every opening in the woodland his eyes swept the bottom below, probing for signs of a rescue party. The shooting of Lije had been a complication which might cost much. It was a physical impossibility for him to propel his huge body over that rough going with anywhere near the speed the younger man could attain, and every minute was precious. He had small faith in the efficacy of his lecture to Bide—the crux of the whole undertaking was the capture and transportation to Blaney of the prisoner before the rest of the clan had an opportunity to make an attempt at rescuing him.

Bide's presence had not been an insuperable bit of hard luck, but added to the time-wasting crawl through the woods it began

Digitized by Google

to loom with much significance. It was almost inevitable that Bide would lead a few of the best shots in Kerryville to the assistance of his brother. It might be best, reflected Watkins calmly, to get back to Blaney through the woods instead of along the road. The party might have a chance to elude their pursuers by that method.

With exasperating slowness, although the sheriff forced his fat legs to their utmost, the little cavalcade finally reached the retreat of the deputies, a hundred yards from the main road to Blaney.

"I had t' tickle 'im with a bullet t' keep 'im from g-gittin' away," puffed the sheriff, mopping his brow with his sleeve.

"I'm sure built fur comfort instead o' speed, and we lost a lot o' time. Bide Kerry was with 'im when I nabbed 'im, and it's a mortal cinch he'll be comin' —— fer leather t' git 'im."

He shoved the battered felt hat farther back on his head, and scratched one pendulous jowl thoughfully.

"I reckon we'll be safer t' take the main road—there may be enough traffic so's the Kerrys won't dare spring anything. If they caught us in the woods we'd b-be nothin' but rifle fodder fur 'em. Whut d' ye think, Sim?"

The wiry, sandy-haired deputy thus addressed spat leisurely.

"Main road fur me," he stated. "If they ever got us in the woods——"

"Aw right. Boost Lije up on the extry hoss and let's git gone from here."

In a moment the little band trotted from their clump of trees and set off briskly down the road. Watkins kept a wary eye to the rear. They had covered five miles, without having sighted a vehicle of any kind, when the sheriff glimpsed an automobile speeding toward them from the direction of Kerryville.

"Keep goin' while I take a squint at 'em," he ordered the deputies.

He swung Alexander around and took out the field glasses. For a moment he peered through them steadily, and then cursed with feeling. Then he urged the horse to a gallop.

"Bide Kerry, Lon Catfield and old Eli comin' in that Ford," he yelled as he overtook the party. "Git to the woods!"

The protection of the forest was a hundred yards away, and the oncoming automobile perhaps four hundred yards behind. The county officers, slashing at their prisoner's horse as well as their own, set off for the woods to fight things out. Less than twenty-five yards from the shelter of the trees Watkins' horse suddenly crumpled under him. The sheriff was thrown heavily, and a short stump in the ragged field got in its work. His huge body lay motionless, a discolored lump raising rapidly on his forehead.

A second later there came another rifle-report from the now standing car, and the sandy-haired deputy slid from his horse. With a high-pitched cry Lije Kerry whirled his horse and started for his clansmen, who were now running across the field. The third deputy, riding with all his might for the woods, was taken completely by surprize. He could not stop his frightened horse immediately, and his attempt to turn in the saddle and shoot at the fleeing prisoner was a failure. A shot from Bide Kerry's rifle fanned his cheek, the moment before his horse plunged into the screen of the woods.

The Ford turned back toward Kerryville, and with the rescued Lije in the back seat sped over the way it had come.

Watkins came to with the face of Mr. Cyrus Bratton of Blaney looking down into his own.

"What happened, George?" demanded the merchant, dashing another handful of water into the prone Watkins' discolored face.

"The Kerrys shot us up and got Lije Kerry," returned the sheriff, sitting up and trying to fight off the dizziness. "Where are the other boys?"

"Sim is laying over here dead. I don't know——"

The other deputy, a bearded old-timer, rode out of the woods.

"Lije got away from me," he said quietly, "Right after you two went down. Bide Kerry —— near got me. They went back Kerryville way just a few minutes ago. My —— horse got so scared I couldn't stop him fur a minute. Sim dead?"

"Yes. Pete, you git the horses and lead 'em back t' Blaney. Cy, you drive me b-back there so's I can git a posse together. Them three hellions 'll make fur the backwoods—Tennessee, prob'ly. I'll git every man in Blaney and the militia if necessary t' try and git 'em!"

All three men helped carry the body of the dead deputy to Bratton's car, and then

Digitized by Google

the bearded man went back to collect the horses. Bratton stepped on the big touring car, and in a few minutes they were whirling through the outskirts of Blaney.

SNAPPER MACNEIL'S wiry body was hunched over until his chin nearly scraped his knees, as he perched on the fence separating the improvised flying field from the road. Every one else in the detachment was in Blaney, with the exception of two enlisted men left as guards. Only one truck and the three remaining ships were on the field. Officer-of-the-day was a tedious detail, MacNeil reflected morosely.

As usual, he was thinking of himself and how badly he was being treated. He was unhappy, although he would not admit it. His love of self-dramatization, plus his inability ever to grant publicly that perhaps he might make a mistake, had driven him into an imaginary isolation ever since Jim Broughton's aerial combat, but down in his heart he knew that now the other flyers were really disgusted with him. Previously he had taken a martyr-like joy in playing the role of injured outcast, knowing all the while that at bottom the others had nothing against him. He had simply been trying to usurp the center of the stage in another manner, by focusing the sympathy of his comrades upon him.

Now however, they were through. Snapper knew it. His freckled face was white and his eyes tragic as he faced the dilemma. But his realization of his position was not strong enough to bring him to the point where he was willing to look at himself with an unprejudiced eye and admit the unworthy things he found there.

Instead of admitting his mistakes, his brain went off on the self-pity trail again, and seethed with mental denunciations of the jealousy and unfairness of the detachment in general and Captain Flanders in particular. He took a certain satisfaction in rehearsing mental speeches to the whole crowd in which he told them what he thought of them, and announced that he would not be the goat for everything unpleasant that happened.

But underneath it all something was gnawing at his heart, and he knew that he was utterly miserable.

He wondered idly when the sheriff was going to arrest Lije Kerry. There was a typical instance of the way he had been picked on, blamed for everything——

A battered Ford swooped around the curve and bore down on the lonely flyer. There were four passengers in it, and three rifles projected above the windshield. The top was down.

As they came closer, lifting billows of dust behind, MacNeil noted without particular interest that two of the passengers were Lije Kerry and Bide, the father of the little girl who had been killed. Then he recognized Lonny Catfield, the man who had made that nasty remark and caused the fight the first afternoon they had been in Kerryville. Another instance of unfairness, reflected MacNeil bitterly. The fourth man was gaunt and tall, and his reddish beard covered his face to the eyes.

He saw Lije Kerry lean over and speak eagerly to the men in front. With grinding brakes the jitney came to a stop a few feet from the surprized airman.

All four men tumbled out of the machine, three of them carrying guns.

"Git off that fence—ye're comin' with us!" commanded Bide Kerry, his eyes flaming suddenly as he saw who it was.

"Why—what do you mean?" stammered Snapper, taken by surprize.

"Jest whut I said! Come on, and none o' yer talk!"

"We ain't figurin' to have no airyplanes shootin' machine-guns at us!" Lije Kerry told him, his sinister eyes alight with triumph.

The white-faced MacNeil comprehended the situation quickly. Evidently there had been a running fight with the sheriff or his representatives, and Lije had escaped the clutches of the law. Either that, or they were fleeing before the sheriff actually attempted an arrest. In that event, they must have been warned. In either case, the outlook for one Snapper MacNeil was very dark. His two worst enemies were now dragging him roughly toward the automobile.

Private Sill came running from the trucks to see what the excitement was. He had been asleep.

"Come here, you!" bellowed Bide Kerry, his rifle projecting meaningly from the side.

The puzzled soldier slowed to a walk and drew near unwillingly.

"In a little while autos'll be comin' up thet road thar, chasin' us," the mountaineer

Digitized by Google

said rapidly. "When they come, you tell 'em not to try no shootin' from airyplanes at us, cause we got yer own man hyar, see? Tell 'em we'll let him loose soon's we make Tennessee. The only way they can git us is with planes, and in thet case they'll kill their own man. Air ye sure ye can tell 'em all thet?"

The soldier nodded. The Ford took off in a cloud of dust, and disappeared around the curve, headed for the impenetrable fastnesses of the back country.

Snapper rode silently, his face very white. Kerry's words back there about releasing him when they had penetrated far enough into the hills gave him little comfort. It was not pleasant to meet the leer of Lije Kerry, or the meaning smiles of Lon Catfield, whom he had struck down that day. And in Bide Kerry's eyes, when he looked at the slim little flyer, there flamed the fire of the zealot. As his miserable thoughts ranged over his predicament, Snapper knew that the father of the little girl his ship had mangled could kill him with a satisfaction almost religious.

BROUGHTON and Flanders were waiting idly in the sheriff's office for that gentleman's return. They were eager to ascertain what success he had met with, and to start in on his prisoner.

As noon approached they began to get a trifle uneasy. Mayor Sutton came in, and partially reassured them by stories of the obese Watkins' penchant for slow but exceedingly sure methods. The mayor was gazing out the window, mouthing a cigar, when his bright eyes discerned a familar figure in Bratton's car, just drawing up to the courthouse.

"There's George, in Cy Bratton's car, and he hasn't got either his horse, his deputies or his prisoner," he announced.

The flyers crowded to the window and watched the two men half-run up the walk. In a few seconds they burst in the office.

"Got Kerry and had 'im half-way home when some others—Bide and Lon Catfield among 'em, shot it out and got him away from us. G-got to raise a big posse, but it won't do no good. They got too much start."

"What about us helping out?" queried Flanders eagerly. "Our planes can keep circling over the car, if we can find it."

"There's only one road—they'll keep on that a matter o' fifty miles, and then leave the car and git out in the woods and make fer Tennessee," stated the sheriff. "But we can't catch 'em. Yer planes——"

"We could scare 'em to death by shooting near 'em with machine-guns, and then drop a note to stop or we'd shoot to kill," suggested Broughton.

"By Godfrey, why not, George?" exclaimed the mayor.

"No reason why not. Better git started right away, son. We'll be about two hours behind the Kerrys—mebbe you can hold 'em up enough so's we can get 'em. I'll deputize ye now. Shoot t' kill if they won't stop."

Broughton's calm, blue-eyed gaze met the unemotional sheriff's, and there was no sign of flinching in either man. Broughton knew that Watkins meant what he said, and Watkins knew that Broughton would do it.

"I'll run you over," offered Bratton.

Both Flanders and Broughton climbed in, and the big car hummed along toward Kerryville. They averaged close to fifty miles an hour, and in twenty minutes were roaring up the street in Kerryville, watched by many peering interested eyes.

Private Sill, shaking a trifle at the importance of his mission, was occupying Snapper's old seat on the fence. As the two airmen flung out of the car Flanders yelled.

"Where's Lieutenant MacNeil?"

Sill tumbled off the fence in his eagerness, and in breathless gasps strove to tell the whole story in one sentence.

"My ——, talk slow!" Flanders burst out after he had vainly tried to make sense from the enlisted man's story.

"Take three deep breaths, begin at the beginning, and tell everything," suggested Jim gently, his eyes boring into the soldier's as though striving to communicate a measure of calmness to him.

Thus admonished, Sill finally succeeded in telling his story.

"It's the fine hand of our flying expert Lije Kerry again," stated Flanders "Nobody else would have thought of the possibility of using machine-guns against them. Well, I guess we're stopped."

Jim chewed a blade of grass thoughtfully.

"Personally, I don't believe that bunch'll ever let Snapper get away from 'em," he said at length. "In the first place, there's

Digitized by Google

the father of the dead girl and the man Snapper fought with. In the second place, if they did set him free after a while it would increase their chances of capture a good many times over. While this country is wild and all that, it'd be hard to find a place where Snapper couldn't reach some civilization in a day or two, and get word back as to where the Kerrys were."

Flanders' face grew hard at Broughton's words. He knew that there was a great probability that what Jim was saying was gospel truth.

"Let me take the Fokker, Harry," came Broughton's deliberate words.

"What've you got up your sleeve?" demanded the C. O. eagerly.

"Just the beginning of a scheme, now, but time's precious and maybe I can whip it into shape while I'm in the air."

"Get the Fokker ready!" the captain ordered Sill.

"And strap an ax to the wing," added Broughton as Sill started on the run.

"Why the ax, and what are you planning to do, anyhow?"

"I'm sort of figuring on a holdup, Harry," said Broughton with a slow smile. He sobered quickly, his eyes resting absently on the rushing figures of the two soldiers, who were removing motor and cockpit covers and hurrying desperately in their effort to get the Fokker started.

"Snapper must be going through hell right now," he opined at length. "He's really only a kid, you know, and he must realize how little chance he, in particular, has got with those *hombres*."

"It's too —— bad. Snapper's gone all to pieces in the last few days, but he's had a lot of hard luck, I must admit that."

"Sometimes that makes a man, if he lives through it," stated Jim judicially.

Flanders, almost bursting with curiosity and eager interest in Broughton's plans, nevertheless did not press him for details. He knew that his old friend wouldn't say a word until he had all the details figured out, and that he had a positive abhorrence for doing any talking before acting. And if Jim had asked for all the captain's clothes as a necessary part of the scheme the C. O. would have contendedly donned a barrel and asked no questions. That was the kind of a fellow Broughton was. His reserve was sometimes nerve-racking, but he had the knack of growing on anybody.

The Mercedes burst into drumming life, the surrounding hills sending back the echoes in rolling reverberations.

"So long, Harry. A couple of hours ought to tell the tale," said Broughton. "Say, lend me your gun, will you? I've only got two along."

JIM'S gun belt, which he had owned ever since his border days, was unlike the usual Army belt because it upheld two holsters. He strapped it around him, and then adjusted a shoulder holster which he drew from his effects in one of the trucks. Into this holster he put the captain's Colt. Then he made his way toward the warming Fokker.

He motioned the mechanic out of the cockpit, and took up the task of readying the motor himself. He noted that the ax was wired on the lower right wing, close to the fuselage.

His eyes roved over the instruments, with their German tags. *"Auf," "Zu," "Hauptank," "Luft"*—all the appellations were in German. It did not take long to find out that the sturdy Mercedes, which some flying enthusiasts claim will run whether it has all its cylinders or not, was in good shape. Neither magneto showed a miss, and the rhythm of the firing cylinders was perfect. The hotter it is the better a Mercedes will run, so Jim settled down to the tedious job of getting the six cylinder motor up to eighty degrees, spark retarded all the way to hasten matters.

That five minutes gave him an opportunity to get the details of his plan figured out. Unless Lije Kerry should prove too wise, he thought it would work. Seldom in his life had he desired the successful culmination of an effort as much as now. Underneath his stolid exterior Jim Broughton was as tender-hearted as a woman, and the thought of young MacNeil buried in those pathless mountains with his bitterest enemies, was infinitely more affecting to him than if he himself were in a similar predicament.

At his nod the blocks were pulled from the wheels, and with the aid of the mechanics the little scout turned in its tracks. The tail answered his pressure on the stick instantaneously, and in less than a hundred feet the Fokker left the ground and drove upward.

Barely high enough to skim the mountains,

Digitized by Google

Jim followed the road, which grew rougher mile by mile. In twenty minutes he had picked up the Ford, toiling upward like an ant between the steep hillsides which began at the edges of the trail. The top was down, and he could see the upturned faces of the occupants. They did not shoot at him, secure in the presence of MacNeil and the knowledge that no car could overtake them with their start.

Broughton's eyes swept the hills and valleys beneath him appraisingly. The road wound on until it was lost miles ahead. So far as he could see there was no cross-trail, corroborating what the sheriff had said about the probable plans of the outlaws—to take the car as far as they could and then strike out on foot for either West Virginia or Tennessee. It was good country for a man to lose himself in—hundreds of miles of all but deserted mountain land where there was not a single inhabitant.

He wingturned sharply, and drove back over the trail he had come for five miles, getting so low that he barely scraped the trees. Part of the time he flew down valleys below the level of the hill-crests. When he had been out of sight of the fleeing men for four minutes he turned at right angles, and still as low as possible flew ten miles. His object in staying low was to keep out of sight of the men he was following.

When he estimated that he was far enough west of the road so that the mountaineers would not hear his motor he turned again, southward, and flew on a parallel course to that of the road, still as low as he could get. Had it not been for the greatness of the stake for which he was playing he would have enjoyed that contour flying—the Fokker had plenty of reserve power, and it was a stimulating experience to dive down into the valleys, scud along the bottom, zoom the towering trees or climb up a mountainside, and then dive rapidly down the other side, the waving treetops only a few feet below.

When he figured that he was fifteen or twenty miles ahead of the car, which could make only very slow progress, he cut back toward the road again. In ten minutes it came in sight, skirting the edge of a mountain. And luckily a reasonably good location for his enterprise was within sight, thus saving him valuable time which he had figured on using in looking around.

On the side of the mountain was a small clearing, apparently the result of a tiny landslide. It was not more than fifty feet long, but the grade was steep.

There was a sheer fall of a hundred feet on the eastern side of the road, the clearing being on up-slope above the road, to the west. He circled out over the ravine, scarcely twenty-five feet above the level of the road and flew across the road toward the bare spot. He cut his motor half-way, and pulled the nose up. The light little ship started floating downward. With his head over the side of the cockpit and hands on throttle and stick he jockeyed plane and motor. The scout, dropping almost straight down, barely cleared the trees on the lower edge of the clearing. A quick burst of throttle did not take effect quickly enough. The nose dropped, twenty feet above the ground, in a stall. At a steep angle the Fokker crashed to the ground.

What saved Broughton from a nasty wreck was the fact that through the now wide-open motor the ship had speed enough, just before crashing, to answer the stick slightly. It decreased the angle of impact, and the sturdy plane plowed along the ground, the wings crumpling and the landing-gear nothing but a mass of wreckage. The wheels were forced up through the wings, and the tubular iron bracing in the fuselage buckled on itself. Aside from a splinter in his right leg, which had come from the landing gear now poked up through the flooring, Jim was unhurt.

His breeches were so torn that he had to waste but little time in getting the splinter out. This done, he unwired the ax and made his way rapidly down the slope toward the narrow, grass-grown trail.

Once again fortune favored him a little. Trees grew thickly along the edge of the road. In fifteen minutes he had felled three of them across it. Sizeable rocks, evidently the remains of the landslide, he rolled down to make a part of his barricade. Rotting logs he used also.

In a half-hour, with the aid of branches which he lopped off he had a serviceable barricade. With rocks he formed a good shield for himself. As a last touch he procured linen enough from the ship to roll into an impromptu megaphone. This done, he lay flat behind his shelter, and waited. He hoped with all his heart that he had succeeded in keeping out of sight of the

Digitized by Google

clansmen, and that they would round the curve a hundred feet below his self-made fort without suspicion.

In a half-hour he heard the clamor of a laboring motor. In five minutes the Ford rounded the curve.

He waited until it came to a stop, and he could hear the surprized curses of the occupants. Then he got into action with his megaphone.

"Get out, and throw up your hands!" he shouted.

For a moment there was dead silence. Sighting carefully, he shot. The pop of an automobile tire mingled with the crack of the Colt.

"The next time, it'll be one of you!" he yelled. "Get out, and leave your guns behind!"

Lije Kerry was first to move. He clambered out slowly, holding one arm stiffly in its sling. The red-bearded man and Lon Catfield followed. Neither man had a gun.

Bide Kerry was behind the wheel, on the cliff-side. Under cover of the movements of the other two he decided to make a break. Without warning, gun in hand, he leaped over the edge of the steep slope.

He was in the air when Broughton shot. A yell of pain was his reward.

"Get busy, Snapper!" he yelled. "I'll cover the others!"

MacNeil, who had been like a man in a daze for the last minute, grabbed one of the rifles and leaped out of the car. Kerry was still rolling down the slope. His rifle had left his hands.

"Hands up or I'll shoot!" he shouted, a quaver of excitement in his voice.

Then he disappeared over the edge after Bide.

"Walk slowly toward me!" commanded the invisible voice tersely, and the mountaineers had no choice but to obey.

The man behind the barricade had been nothing if not businesslike.

With a Colt in each hand Jim arose, skirted his screen and halted his prisoners. In a moment the scrambling on the hillside began to come closer. Jim glanced over to see MacNeil, his rifle in one hand, supporting Kerry up the slope. The Kentuckian was evidently badly wounded.

They finally made it, Kerry slumping weakly to the ground.

"Search everybody, and bind old red-beard and your friend Catfield there," said Jim tersely.

As Snapper glanced at his fellow-flyer the words on his lips froze, for it seemed he had never seen the man before. The placid, stoical flyer looked as though he did not have a nerve in his body, as always, but a cold fire flamed in his eyes and the square face was bleak and cruel. It was the reflection of a fundamentally different personality that the young airman saw in the older man's face—something so deadly that MacNeil, involountarily, shrank as from a stranger.

Without a word he proceeded with the search. The mountaineers had no other weapons, but their plentiful supply of ammunition was confiscated.

"Keep them covered while I do a little amateur surgery and get them fixed to wait for the sheriff and his posse," said Jim, handing over his guns to MacNeil.

His voice was a trifle less cold and his whole manner more normal than it had been a moment before.

Bide Kerry had been shot through the right lung. There was nothing to do but bandage the wound and make him as comfortable as possible with the aid of cushions from the automobile. He was barely conscious, and in his occasionally fluttering eyes was the light of delirium. The red-bearded man was tightly bound, and for additional safety Jim trussed up Lije Kerry's ankles. The crafty-looking Lije was silent as the others, his small eyes refusing to meet his captors' at any time. A certain dignity which 'Red-beard' maintained was entirely absent in Lije and Lon Catfield, whom Jim likewise bound tightly. The four feudists sat or lay in absolute quiet.

"Well, I guess we can settle down to wait," remarked Broughton.

For a moment his eyes were brooding as he stood over the lanky, motionless form of Bide Kerry.

"Something pitiful about him," he said slowly, and when he turned toward MacNeil all the madness was gone from his eyes. He was the calm, reserved man MacNeil had known before.

For a moment the two flyers sat silently on the running-board of the Ford. The buzzing of insects and the whispering of the breeze in the treetops was all that broke the quiet of the forest.

Jim glanced sideways at the face of the

Digitized by Google

younger man. It was thin and strained and the eyes seemed to have sunk deeper in their sockets. Jim surveyed his cigaret closely, shifted his position slightly, and then began on MacNeil.

At first he did not spare him. Inexorably he traced MacNeil's actions since he himself had arrived at Goddard Field, and without mercy he pinned the younger man to the wall. He did not mince words as he detailed the many times when Snapper had been at fault, and how often his pettiness had alienated him, slowly but surely, from his comrades.

Snapper was red as fire, and time after time hot retorts rose to his lips, but they were never spoken. With bowed head he listened.

And then, from his own varied and often bitter experience, Jim told what he knew of a man's relationship to men, and of how little words counted in the long run. He told of times when he himself had been the self-made outcast, miserable because of his own failure to measure up to standard.

Often his speech was halting and slow, for he did not express himself readily, but his scalpel laid bare the plague-spots in Snapper MacNeil. And because at heart MacNeil realized the truth of it all, and because he had glimpsed in the last few weeks something about Broughton which told of the surmounting of life in the raw and the overcoming of odds such as Snapper had never known, he took it. Bit by bit he shrank in his own estimation as conceit, pettiness, self-pity, in his own makeup were laid bare to him.

And always in the background, woven into Broughton's often brutal words, was the realization that Jim had saved his, the despised MacNeil's life at the risk of his own.

Something dependable and sympathetic in the steady-eyed older man made it easier for the high strung Snapper to take his medicine. There was a certain understanding permeating Broughton's cruel frankness, and little by little it wore away MacNeil's last barriers. Hot-headed denial and blazing resentment found no outlet through his lips, and gradually even the impulses themselves disappeared.

There were hot tears in his eyes when the far-off sound of automobile motors in low gear came to the ears of prisoners and captors. For the first time in his life Snapper MacNeil was eating humble pie, and the only brightness ahead, he felt, lay in the path which Broughton had pointed out to him.

As they rose to their feet to walk to the turn in the trail and greet the oncoming posse Jim's big hand fell on MacNeil's shoulder.

"It took me a long while to learn I wasn't the best in the world and to give the other man all that was due him," he stated with a slow half-smile. "And the funny part of it'll be that you'll find that the more you boost yourself the less anybody else will boost you. Snapper, a good man don't have to prove it by his tongue, and likewise it's a specially good man that knows he's good without thinking he's a lot better."

Snapper took a long breath, as though casting off a breaking load.

"I guess you're right," he admitted, which was in itself quite remarkable.

FOUR days later the recruiting detachment finished its work. They secured their quota of recruits, and in addition had the satisfaction of knowing that Lije Kerry had made a confession as to his tampering with the C. C. gears. Bide, while badly wounded, would recover. With the whole incident as a talking point Sheriff Watkins and a powerfully armed posse had gone into Kerryville, collected the principal men of the town, and laid down the law. According to the judgement of old "Wild Bill" and the somewhat awed attitude of the other mountaineers, Kerryville was somewhat chastened. Moonshining, as the sheriff always maintained, could not be stopped, but as he put it to Captain Flanders:

"They jest bit off more'n they could chew, and its got 'em scared. Now that Lije's been caught, and the Army's concerned, they're treadin' soft and light. We won't need no militia to guard the courthouse when Lije comes up fer trial, and Lon Catfield and the rest. They're scared. They're too close to Blaney, and they got too many men's hands against 'em."

On the last night in Blaney the Chamber of Commerce tendered the detachment a banquet. Various Blaney men spoke pleasantly, with Mayor Sutton carrying off the honors. The new recruits were all present, as were the enlisted men of the detachment.

One by one the flyers were called on.

Digitized by Google

Flanders' address was short and vigorous, Broughton's even shorter and somewhat halting, Nolan revealed a certain quiet humor which convulsed his listeners, and Seaton tried to be too flowery and ended up floundering in an oratorical swamp. It was Snapper MacNeil whose speech was the event of the evening, and changed an ordinary good time into something which made its participants think of the occasion and what it represented as something significant.

For Snapper, under the guise of telling the recruits the kind of an outfit they were coming to, traced the events of the trip from a personal standpoint, and his own shoulders took all the blame. And then:

"Those flying stunts I did, gentlemen, were taught to me by Jim Broughton there, after I'd tried every way to make things disagreeable for him when he came to our outfit a new man. You all know that he captured those Kerry thugs single-handed and saved my life. I'm sorry, you gentlemen of Blaney, that I've been responsible for adding a lot of tragedy to this trip, but I guess you can see that if any of our Blaney soldiers get off the track a bit they'll have a pretty good bunch to set them back on again."

The captain, after the banquet was over surveyed the bright-eyed, newly humble flyer with a queer smile on his face.

"Think you've got wise to yourself, Snapper?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then we'll give you a chance to stay in the outfit."

"A chance is all I want sir."

As he saluted and turned away Flanders saw Broughton nearby.

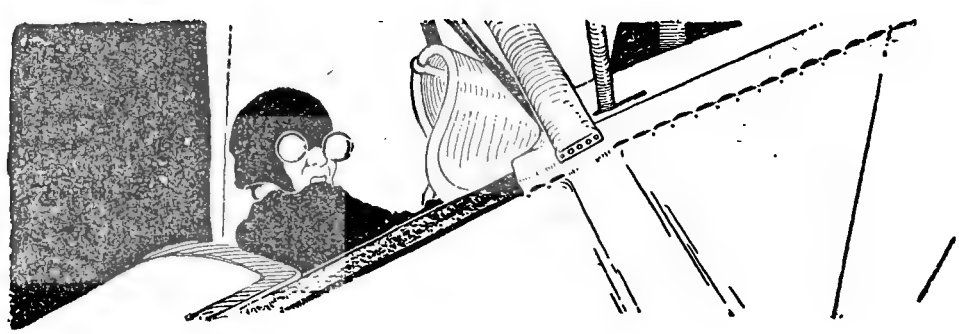
"What's got into MacNeil, Jim?" demanded the captain. "The last few days, with the climax tonight——"

"Maybe riding along with the Kerrys made him realize how little he amounted to," grinned Jim. "There's nothing like looking a bullet in the eye to make a man realize how little it takes to snuff all his importance out."

Flanders looked at the tranquil face before him sharply.

"Thought maybe you might have raked him over the coals and showed him the error of his ways," he remarked.

"Talking never changed an oilcan into a regular guy unless he had the makings himself," stated Jim. "Let's go home. I'm sleepy, and that moonshine is wearing off."



Digitized by Google

The CAMP-FIRE
A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

IN CONNECTION with his article in this issue, a word from Mr. Bechdolt. I'd like to add the magazine's thanks to his not only in the case of Mr. McCarthy but also to all the other Camp-Fire comrades who have aided Mr. Bechdolt in making his articles authoritative by putting him in touch with information on the Old West that is not easily obtained by writers.

Carmel, California.

The tale "Red Blood and White" was first suggested to me by Mr. D. F. McCarthy of Lipscomb, Texas, who sent an account of Cynthia Ann Parker's experiences. The brief article which he mailed me gave me the tip, and I later dug up the data. Mr. McCarthy is a Camp-Fire companion.

I have a pretty formidable list of authorities for the tale—books all of them, of course. As to its authenticity, the narrative of Quanah's courtship was told by himself; the Ross incident was told by Ross; the Adobe Walls fight is the Indian's version.

The books from which this data came include Thos. Bird Grinnel's "Fighting Cheyennes;" Sowell's "Texas Indian Fighters;" Wood's "Famous Indian Chiefs;" Thrall's "History of Texas;" Bancroft's "Native Races;" "Texas State Historical Association Quarterly;" James T. De Shield's "Texas Border Wars;" "The Life of Billy Dixon," by Frederick S. Bardo; Gregg's "Commerce of the Prairies;" "Personal Recollections," by General Nelson A. Miles; "House Documents—Bureau of Ethnology;" "Handbook of the American Indian."
—F. R. BECHDOLT.

A NEW ZEALAND comrade tells us about the fishing there. It's an amazing thing, but so far as I remember, with all the discussions we've had at Camp-Fire we've never really got launched at fish-stories. The following ought to start us off. But remember—our Camp-Fire is the worst place in the world to say something you can't back up with facts, for the comrades are sure to call a bluff and chorus a "bawl-out." Maybe that is why fish-stories have been scarce with us. Note that comrade McDonald sends a newspaper article and that the catches given are certified by a New Zealand club. A newspaper article is by no means final proof, but this one sounds sort of solid.

Digitized by Google

Auckland, New Zealand.

In a recent "Camp-Fire" you reproduced a note from Mr. Liebe in which he mentions that he had caught a shark as big as himself. I thought that the enclosed cutting from the *New Zealand Herald* might be of interest. It might also be news to a good many of Camp-Fire that such fishing is to be had in New Zealand.

I am also sending you a *Weekly News* which illustrates a couple of the swordfish taken with rod and line. There is no doubt, from what one can gather from visitors who have been in different parts of the world, that New Zealand is hard to beat from a sportsman's point of view, more particularly perhaps in the fishing line.

Talking of fishing I have seen the rainbow trout in the spawning season coming up the stream from Lake Tarawera that close together that you could lift them out on to the bank with a shovel, dozens of them weighing 20 lbs. and over. This sounds like a fish yarn, but if you ever take a trip out here at the right season of the year you can be shown.—P. K. McDONALD.

The clipping follows:

New world's records in the way of deep-sea fishing have just been established. The record-breaker is Mr. H. White-Wickham, a visitor from London, who is at present in Christchurch. As a result of 11 days' fishing at Russell, Bay of Islands, his bag was seven kingfish (weight 346 lbs.), seven Mako sharks (weight 1,853 lbs.) and three swordfish (weight 888 lbs.). The number of fish caught and their total weight are probably a world's record for the time taken, but there is no doubt about the fact that three world's records for single fish were established, namely a Mako shark weighing 350 lbs., a swordfish weighing 327 lbs., and a Mako shark weighing 442 lbs.

MOST of Mr. Wickham's big fish were caught off Cape Brett, and right through his campaign he used a 16 oz. tarpon rod. The big 442 lb. shark was 9 ft. 6 in. in length and 4 ft. 11 in. girth, while the big swordfish was 10 ft. 10 in. by 4 ft. 1 in., and the sword was 2 ft. 2 in. in length. The previous biggest Mako shark caught in the vicinity, was alleged to have been 398 lbs., but its weight was not authentic. For a record, it is necessary to secure a certificate from the Kingfish Club at Russell, and Mr. Wickham has such certificates in respect of all his big catches.

The expedition was carried out in a launch, and the sport that resulted may be gaged from the fact that the biggest shark and the biggest swordfish each took over three hours and a half to land, and took Mr. Wickham about seven miles out to sea.

"YOU have quite the most wonderful deep-sea fishing in the world," remarked Mr. Wickham. "While the trout fishing I got at Rotorua, Taupo, and Wairakei, was simply great, of course, lake fishing is not in it with river fishing, and my great regret is that I have no time on this trip to do anything in the rivers, or to do any hunting. I have to leave New Zealand next week, but I certainly intend to come back and have some more of your wonderful sport. There is nothing to touch it. The next best sport I have had was at Catalina Island in the Pacific, but great as the sport is there, it is not in the same street as you can supply in New Zealand.

"Truly, the Mako shark is a great fish for sport with rod and line," said Mr. Wickham. "I hold the record for catching the largest shark in England, 56 lbs., in the Bristol Channel. It is just as well that I have the certificates to prove my catches out here, or they would credit me with telling the old fish story."

Continuing, he said he had fished in most of the best known parts of the world, but he had never found such sport as he had experienced in New Zealand. Apart altogether from the deep-sea monster he thought the rainbow trout in New Zealand had no rivals anywhere.

And now about something else comrade McDonald sent me. Who knows about vegetable caterpillars? They looked like mummyfied caterpillars, but from just back of the head of each grew a "tree" several inches long.

In looking through some old boxes of mine a day or two ago I came across among other things some vegetable caterpillars and thought that you might be interested in having some of them as curios. As far as I know there is no other place in the world where these can be got, and only one or two places in New Zealand, one of which is Mamaku, where I spent ten or twelve years of my life in various capacities in a sawmill and lumber camp, eventually having sole control there.

I HAD a long scientific article about these caterpillars, but can not at present lay my hands on it—if I find it will send you a copy of it. However, the natives' theory is that the caterpillar lives on the rata tree, eats the seed of this, and dies from the effect, falling off the tree to the ground where the seed germinates and, while germinating, changes the caterpillar from animal to vegetable. This theory has a good many points in its favor whether correct or otherwise; there is a big caterpillar found on the rata tree; these vegetable caterpillars are never found under any other tree than the rata. The rata starts as a small vine which climbs up some other tree in the bush (usually one of the pine species) and eventually kills it; so that the little sprout from the head of a caterpillar might easily be the start of a rata tree, although I have never got the caterpillar with a sprout on it more than a foot long.

ALL that can be seen of these caterpillars when you dig them out of the ground is the end of the little vine growing out of the head, you will notice just about how much of it was sticking above the ground if you look closely at the specimens I am sending you. I dug these out of the ground myself some eight or nine years ago and they have lain in a box ever since.

Of course when taken out of the ground they are not quite so dried up and wrinkled as at present being full of sap, but you can still see that the caterpillar is complete. You have seen these before, but I am sending them in the hope that they will prove of interest.—P. K. McDONALD.

I sent some of the caterpillars to the

Digitized by Google

Museum of Natural History and received the following from Dr. Lutz, the Curator of the Department of Entomology:

New York.

I thank you for the two specimens of "Vegetable Caterpillars" from New Zealand. As frequently happens, there is a basis for the popular notion concerning these caterpillars although not all of the notion is correct. I have no doubt that the caterpillar originally lived on the rata tree as Mr. McDonald says, but the subsequent history is that the caterpillar became infected with a parasitic fungus. This fungus killed the caterpillar just before pupation and the sprout-like growth is the fruiting hyphæ of the fungus. The caterpillar is filled with fungus to such an extent that after the caterpillar dies it, nevertheless, retains its original shape fairly well.—FRANK E. LUTZ, Curator.

The above was sent to Mr. McDonald and, later, their official thanks for the specimens. Here's his reply:

Auckland, New Zealand.

Now that it is brought under my notice I am of the impression that the same explanation was given in a local paper here some years ago from which I got a clipping but which seems to have been mislaid. At the same time it is very puzzling that this vegetable caterpillar, as we call them, should be found only under the rata tree, it seems peculiar that they should only be attacked by this parasitic fungus on this tree. However I guess the scientific gentlemen know a good deal more about it than I do.

They are certainly a very funny proposition and, as I said in a previous letter, I have not heard of their being found in any other part of the world. It would be rather interesting to know whether any of the members of Camp-Fire have come across them in other parts of the world.—P. K. McDONALD.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Magruder Maury rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine:

Brookline, Massachusetts.

Dear People around the Camp-Fire: Here I am at last. I've been a long time on the way. When I came back from the Philippines in November, 1900, and enrolled with your organization, the old American Legion, I determined some day to get into closer touch with the good scouts who managed the magazine and you good scouts who read it. In other words, I made up my mind to land a story in *ADVENTURE*—and now I've done it. I hope you will like the story, and that I shall find a permanent place around the Camp Fire.

I'M ASKED to stand up and introduce myself to you all. That's hard on me—and me so bashful. There's not much to tell about me. Like nearly all the rest of you, I've lived always with an itching heel. That's why I've served my time in the Army and Navy, too. Also did a bit with the Scots Greys, using my mother's good old Scotch name to get into the British Army, and got sent down into South Africa for the end of the Boer War. I've never had enough of salt water. Of the oceans, I have still to sail in the Arctic and Antarctic; of the seas, I have yet to taste the flavor of Behring and Okhotsk. I think I've left my wake in most of the larger gulfs, and rounded many of the most important capes.

Ashore, I've shoveled coal into a roadhog in Texas; sold typewriters (two or three, anyway) in St. Louis; moving pictures in Japan; fought with our Army in the Boxer Rebellion; traveled with a road show in the South and done newspaper work from New York to Honolulu, *via* New Orleans, San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco, and back to New York and Boston. But of course that was after I settled down. I'm the son of a clergyman and the father of an incessant talker, aged 12, and I am very happy to be one of you.—MAGRUDER MAURY.

AND a word from him (taken from a letter to me) concerning his complete novelette in this issue:

Sabalala no doubt knows intimately and well that part of Africa about which he writes. Nevertheless, all African villages are not squalid kraals. There is the very best of written authority for these two-story houses I have mentioned. See Professor Weule's account of his investigations for his (German) university in 1906, for one. As all travelers in Equatorial and South Africa know, there are as many variations in the manner of building the huts in which the natives are housed as there are tribes and dialects.

I have tried to make *Mum Tumbo* more convincing. To me, he is very much alive, and there's nothing exactly supernatural about him. *Dabney* is mystified only because of *Mum Tumbo's* possession of knowledge which can surely be explained. It's the sort of "wireless telephony" that Africa, and all primitive places have. In other words, the news really travels by word of mouth, for the most part, though in some instances it is conveyed from one village to another by a sort of drumming. I have not gone into this because I don't understand it any too well myself.—MAGRUDER MAURY.

AS SEVERAL of late have accused our magazine of being pro-British, you might look over this reply by Talbot Mundy to a Canadian who rather bitterly assailed him for being anti-British in one of his stories. Mr. Mundy was born an Englishman but became a naturalized American citizen before the war. And a very good American citizen he has proved himself. If immigration brought us only his kind from the various foreign nations, I should be far less inclined to keep crying, "For God's sake stop immigration!" His idea of becoming an American is first to find out very surely what a real American is and then to identify himself thoroughly with that kind of Americanism—more thoroughly than many a born American.

Digitized by Google

Note that the Canadian complainant has that rather common slant of mind that keeps him from ever seeing the difference between an expression of the author's own opinion and the expression of the opinions of one of the characters in his story. There isn't much use trying to explain the difference to that type of mind. Also he belongs to the type who accept everything pleasant said about their "side" by either author or character, but howl bloody murder over even one single case in which any one whatsoever says anything unpleasant about their "side." They consider it perfectly all right to knock the other fellow's "side" and they raise no cry of bias or prejudice. A magazine could be a very hot-bed of propaganda against any "side" but their own and they'd find it very commendable indeed, but they are totally unable to understand—let alone commend—the kind of impartiality that is really impartial. I'm afraid this Canadian, so strong for everything British, has failed to inherit or imbibe any of the traditional British spirt of fair play. And I'm afraid that those Americans and Canadians whose minds react in similar fashion haven't even a rudimentary understanding of democratic tolerance or ordinary even-handed dealing with the facts of the world in which they live.

Your letter makes good reading, and I hope that now you have the phlegm coughed up you feel lots better. Nothing in an author's life is half so satisfactory as first-hand contact with a reader, and kicks are particularly welcome, or how could a man know wherein he had offended?

However, I'll begin by assuring you that I'm so used to being cursed and howled at as pro-English, that your letter, denouncing me for daring to let a character in my story criticize your king, has filled me with good humor and contentment that will last for months.

You know (or perhaps you don't know), what a character in a story says is no guide whatever to the author's personal opinion. Furthermore, an author is entitled to opinions, just like any other man, and would be an awful specimen if he changed them to oblige a critic. Would you change your opinions to oblige me? (Mind you, you don't know what mine are.)

NOW let's get down to hard tacks. Quoting your letter: "*Jeremy Ross* says some very nasty things about our king and the royal family." Did you ever meet an Australian? Did you ever hear one of the First Australian Contingent talk about the King and the Royal Family after, say, the battle of Gaza, or after Gallipoli? I have. I have lived, camped, eaten and drunk with them. *I know why* the Australians were sent back from Palestine without a chance to go to London.

"This so-called Australian." How many Australians do you know? I've fought them and fought alongside them; also I've humped bluey from Sydney to Brisbane, and have camped with them from Cape Town all the way to Victoria Nyanza. I believe I know what most of them *say* about the Royal Family, as well as how hard they fight for the empire (which is rather different).

You say, "How would you like for some one to remark that they would like to see your President and his family riding around in cages?" Few of us would mind a little thing like that. Any one with an opinion is entitled to it. Putting Harding in a cage and riding him around would be different, and might prove difficult to do. I came down three weeks ago in a train from Boca, California, with one of your Canadians, born near Hudson Bay of Canadian stock. His name is —— and I like him, for he is all man and can handle a dog-team better than most. The things he said about our President, Vice-President, and Congress would have satisfied even your indignant longing for retaliation. Most of the train crew stood around to encourage him, not that anybody cared what he thought, but because the rebellion burning in him was worth a week's journey to see.

Incidentally, —— killed quite a lot of Germans, and he agrees with *Jeremy Ross* about the king.

YOUR'E amusing about *Jim Grim*. You want to know why an Englishman couldn't have been chosen to play the part. All I can tell you is that the British selected an American as the best man available. *Grim* is a real character, as I have made clear more than once in "Camp-Fire."

You say "we" have been governing large spots of the world before the U. S. A. had been heard of. Did you do any of it? Incidentally, when "you" did hear from the U. S. A., it was somewhat distinctly, if memory serves. At any rate, so the histories say.

Personally I admire the British Empire immensely. Scores of my best friends, and some of the men whom I admire as much as any in the world, are helping to hold down its rebellious ends. But on the other hand, I know Indians, Africans, Afrikanders, Australians and Canadians, who think far less favorably of that empire than I do and would be much more willing than I would be to see it smashed.

You say that *Adventure*, as a magazine, seems to take special delight in saying things that slam the British empire. Think again, stranger. Your statement needs tinkering. *Adventure* stands for plain dealing and fair play. It admires and holds up for admiration fair play, decency and patriotism, whenever and wherever they are brought to its notice in a way acceptable to its readers. But its editor is willing to admit that rebels can be patriots; and (I know him rather well personally) he would be unwilling to accept meek adulation of the German House of "Windsor," until lately known as Guelf, as a standard by which stories should be judged.

YOU say, "Also this Talbot Mundy takes a crash at Dukes, Earls and Lords, and the *man* with the monocle."

To that, sir, I give you the retort discourteous or the countercheck quarrelsome, whichever you prefer! The best friend I have in England wears a monocle and happens to be a member of the aristocracy with a seat in the House of Lords. My father wore

Digitized by Google

one. Two of my friends in the U. S. A. wear them.

But, did you ever know an Australian to wear a monocle? And did you ever know an Australian who did *not* poke fun at any one who wore one in his presence?

One of my friends here is an Australian from Queensland, who expects to return before long. He bought me a dinner on the strength of the "Lost Trooper" story and said that in his judgment it presented the Australian "as is." He is an out-and-out empire man, and can wear a lot of medals when so minded. He recently described King George in my presence as a "blighter." What he said was "he comes cheaper in the long run than a president, or we'd have sacked him long ago."

Why don't *you* write a story about an Australian, and submit it to a magazine? Perhaps we're all wrong and don't know what Australians say, do or think. Come across, sir, and enlighten us!

AS FOR your men with monocles who lie in Flanders Fields, there are Americans who lie there too, who did not wear monocles. A Canadian, whom I know well and saw recently, told me with a laugh that "A. E. F." stands for "After England Failed." Maybe it was the monocles that lost the first half-dozen rounds for England?

You say you have read all of my novels, but I don't believe you. If you *had* read them you would know me for an out-and-out admirer of the men (no least of them the aristocrats) who have earned England's reputation.

You say you had the honor to wear His Majesty's uniform for four years. My brother has worn it for twenty-five years. I wore it for six years, all told.

ROMANCE and adventure. Plenty of one for his seeing eye, but none of the other. The second dash does not stand for a cuss-word; the handwriting was unclear here so I don't know who it was that hit comrade Tatum:

New Orleans.

I've read *Adventure* in the Army, Navy, Mexico, Canada and all byway stops in Pullmans and on top of a box-car, but be —— if I have ever had an adventure yet. Have been shot, shot at and half shot. Have been flush, broke and badly bent. When in the Navy one night at San Diego a —— hit me in the head with a beer-bottle. Sometime I'll show you the scar, it's a lulu and that was my only brush with the enemy during the war.

However romance and adventure are two different things. I've seen romance by the yards and bushels, and women don't figure in as I speak of it, a century-plant blooming in the yellow waste of Mexico, the sand dunes of the Great Lakes, the wild poppies clothing a California mountain, a night under the stars, and the cry of a lonely wolf—to me these spell Romance, not fighting a duel of swords or wits over the love of a woman.

Best regards to all of those who gather around the Camp-Fire.—FISHER TATUM.

OUR expedition's committee of three are on the job. Two of them are out of town most of the time and the work of the third makes it almost imposible to tell in advance when his time will be free, so, for a time, meetings are hard to arrange. But, by letter and telephone, they are working out the problem and things are moving as fast as can be expected in these first stages of the campaign.

The first step is to get into touch with one or more South American governments and with museums and other institutions in this country. That kind of thing naturally takes time. Personally, I like the way they're going at it. And they're not making any announcements to you until they have definite and accomplished things to report. We can be well content with comrades Binda, Dunn and Young as our committee.

I may report, however, that they are at present centering their attention on the general territory running from the isthmus down across the various headwater tributaries of the Amazon. It is a country rich in interest and possibilities, parts of it are entirely unexplored and there is more than abundant opportunity for exciting adventure. Also it's the highlands they're considering, and these are free from fever. There isn't much excitement or action in dying of fever or in reading about it, nor is our expedition hunting for a district that offers most chance of killing off its members. On the other hand it's not looking for a district so safe that there isn't a man's size risk involved. But fever is a dull kind of risk compared to a poisoned dart from a blow-gun and things of that kind, and the less our expedition has to risk death from fever the better for all concerned.

The above is not a final plan, but at present it has the committee's attention as the best prospect at this stage of the game. As soon as there is definite news to give you be sure it will be passed on to Camp-Fire at once.

HIS letters are like no other man's and therefore, even if for no other reason, are worth reading. These two letters to you and me have to do with Bill Adams' Off-the-Trail story in this issue:

Lindsay, California.

A few minutes ago I was standing on top of a little hill some ten minutes' walk from my shanty, singing the main sheet chantey, just as Twinkle Bright told me to do.

Down below me were all the little lights coming twinkling from farm windows; men and women climbing out of bed for a day of labor; horses and mules munching their breakfast hay; cows nosing

Digitized by Google

in their bran buckets; small boys rubbing knuckles in their eyes, saying, "Gee, it's Monday. I gotter go to school"; bankers and business men, storekeepers and clerks, all seeing before their eyes round and shining coins—coins—coins—

"Haul away, haul away, haul away the bowline, haul on the bowline, *haul!*"

I'm not a bit musical—no more so than my old friend the common crow; but there's no living man with as many odd snatches of song in his crazy pate as are kept tucked in my old granary. I'm feeling fine, now—thanks to the main sheet chantey.

Who cares for farmers, clerks, coins or labor? Not I. I'm a kid at school—playing hookey nearly every day and never getting caught at it by any one who cares. Why should I care?

THE other day, walking down the road I fell in with an old John Doe—oh, he was a fuzzy old bo!—broken shoes, busted hat, dirty shirt, ragged pants, bundle of old blankets on his back—and a light in the low lee corner of his eye. He was broke. I had a few little coins in my pants pocket.

"Come on, partner," says I, "let's go get some pig's feet and a bite o' rye bread."

He looked at me oddly—for I had a clean shirt upon my back, a shaven face, good shoes upon my feet, a new hat, and no dirt upon my hands.

"Pig's feet," says I; "come on."

He looked me all over. "When the —— did you git religion?" said he. "Pig's feet," says I—"forget religion."

Well, the long and the short of it was that the two of us started off to go to Dicky Minor's lunch-counter together, our arms, for some odd reason, interlocked, and the four eyes of us shining.

OVER the road, along came a party of my acquaintances. There were four of them: good hats to their heads, good shoes to their feet, good shirts to their backs, and money in their pockets. One of them seeing me pointed me out to the others and each one of them, all speaking together sang out,

"Oh, Bill, come on—we're going to the Palace for lunch."

Now the Palace is a swell joint, no end of a swell joint, where they serve lamb cutlets, and white meat of chicken, and inner leaves of lettuce, and purple Emperor grapes, and— There are pretty girls to wait upon a man there, too; and pretty tunes upon a grand piano; and a woman, with a voice like ship's bells, hidden behind palm leaves sings old songs there also.

"Come on, Billy—we're going to the Palace."

Says I: "I'm going with my friend to Dicky Minor's lunch-counter."

The four of them came over the road, looking a bit disdainfully at my old pal with the busted hat and the bits of string to hold his raggedy pants up. "Billy, see here," they said, "here's a pocket full of money and he can go get all the pig's feet and such things he wants—but you come along with us—we're going to the Palace."

Well, I went to Dicky Minor's place, me and my pal. They went to the Palace, to eat meats and to listen to a hired woman's voice singing behind palm leaves.

WHEN the old ragged bo was through with his pig's feet we went to the street and I was about to bid him "so-long," not wanting to seem to intrude too long my company upon him.

He put his arm through mine and I'm blessed if his feet weren't going, jiggedy.

"D'ye ever run across a kid by the name o' Twinkle-Bright?" said he.

"Where is he?" said I, taken all aback.

"They put him in a reform school for stealing eggs from a Methodist minister's hen-house. He wasn't stealing 'em to eat, neither. He was jest a-swipin' 'em fer the fun of suckin' 'em," said old raggedy.

You could have knocked me down with the tail end of a piece of spider web.

Raggedy saw my face and he grinned all over.

"You don't need to git all fussed up, pardner—'tain't the fust time an' 'twon't be the last as Twink's been in a reform school. 'Ee went an' whispered one o' they queer songs o' his in the ear o' the matron—a old dame wi' hard eyes and steel hairpins, long shoes wi' no heels to 'em—*you* know the kind o' dame I mean—an' pipe my deadlights if th' ole dame didn't get 'er big flat feet to dancin'. 'S'welp me if she didn't. An' while she was a hoppin' to an' fro, a-holdin' her wooly old skirts almost to her skinny ol' knees Twink 'opped out o' the top story winder an' beat it. Don't you go to get fussed about young Twink'. *'Ee* kin look arter isself."

THE long and the short of it was that I went over the brow of a hill with old raggedy, and down the valley, and then over the brow of yet another hill and into the low dip of one more valley, and there, under a haystack we lay down together, with a brook bubbling close by us, wild flowers nodding all along the brook side, birds whistling in the tree tops, rabbits playing in the long grasses, and the two bellies of us full as they'd hold of pig's feet and rye bread.

Well, I can't stop to tell you the rest of it. If you ever want to know you'll have to send this back to me; for I'm always writing crazy letters and then either burning them or sending them to some poor chap at the other end of somewhere. It's a way I've got—got it from playing hookey with Twink.

Good-luck. Pardon my cussed garrulity.—BILL.

And then the later letter:

This was the way of it:

I was sitting, down beside the Santa Fé track, down where the gentlemen of the gay old road to anywhere have their jungles, on a night not so very very long ago, when *who* should I meet up with but young Twinkle-Bright his very own self once again after all the long years.

I was putting a couple of straws under the coffee-pot, to get it to boiling, when first I was aware of a pair of feet that jigged upon a narrow railway tie; some one whistling as the mocking bird whistles when the old moon is round and full, in May.

I looked up and our eyes met. Twinkle-Bright quit his jig, quit his whistle, took his hands from his pockets, and came and put a pair of brave young arms about his old shipmate's neck.

"Bill, old son," said he, "how goes it? The old crowd sent me to ask after you. They haven't forgot you, Bill—not one of them."

"Twinks," said I, snuggling my old bald head

Digitized by Google

down on his young shoulder, shutting my furrow-hid eyes, feeling the quick throb of the lad's brave little heart, "Twinks—t'ain't *all* good beer an' gingerbread ashore, sonny boy, see?"

"That's just what Tom and Bloody said you'd say, Bill—just them very identical words. What'll we do, Bill, by way of helping out?"

"Tell me one of the old yarns, Twinks; sonny—don't go till you have—then I'll be feeling better again: an' abler to face the hard money-grubbing looks of the folks who dwell ashore," I answered him. And this is the yarn he told me,

"The luck of the black Tyne ship."

He said it was a true tale; and I, who was raised along the dear old road to anywhere, believed him.

Thus, since beside your Camp-Fire there may be some one such as I, some old bald headed, furrow-eyed man, but without the good luck of being well acquainted with young Twinkle-Bright, I am sending it to you. Not that it is a tale of adventure—for such is not the case; not that I even think that it will be considered suited to your magazine—but just *in case.*

Now the lad told me this:

"Bill, when you find straws in the beer, or buttons in the gingerbread, and a bitter taste in your mouth, you just whistle, once, just the first line of the main sheet chantey—and I'll hear it and come to you." So there you are.

The road to anywhere *knows no time.* The road to anywhere is very gay with wild winds blowing over it; with wild flowers nodding all along it; with wild red sunsets glowing in the dear west sky; and we, who travel westward past those nodding flowers, beneath those singing wild winds, toward that red sunset, care not one little dusty pebble whether we, at the end of the road, come to the high-domed pinnacles of Great Success—just so long as we ken a little cottage on the road-side *where a few flowers grow;* where brave men laugh, men both stout with the stoutness of a mighty strength, and frail men, who need a strong man's friendship; where are the smiling faces of those gold-haired women who see us through our sorrows when the wounds of life flow fast, draining our blood away.

Adios, Adios. The God of the stout, and of the weak, and of the gold-haired women, go beside you.—BILL.

A FRAGMENT from a letter from comrade E. E. Harriman—a bit of praise for our magazine that I pass on to you without apology.

Los Angeles.

A. M. MacDuffee, of Chloride, left home, with the consent of his mother, at sixteen and eventually became one of the most successful hunters for the market in what is now Wyoming. He keeps rather still about it, but others say that he was one of the strongest factors in the general cleaning up (of murderers, horse-thieves, flume-robbers, hold-ups and camp-thieves) that made Wyoming what it is now, a safe and sane State.

Mac's old buffalo gun is mine now, a 45-110 Sharps, and in his old age Mac has given me the hearty friendship of a true Westerner. "Ask Adventure" started it, your sending me his appreciation of my story "Missionary Bill" helped it along, visiting him in Chloride set the dye in the cloth and his week with me last Summer made it into a garment that will wear eternally.

Adventure has brought me friends, many of them, whom I regard highly. I think that it is the greatest friendship-maker extant. It is binding east and west, north and south, into closer relationship and better understanding. For that, I love it.—E. E. HARRIMAN.

BECAUSE publishing three times a month runs off "Lost Trails" inquiries faster than they come in, unless we print only a few each issue, hereafter we'll run "Lost Trails" only in every other issue. Eighteen issues a year covers the ground and does the work. Also it means saving the space in the other eighteen issues a year, that would be taken by the "Lost Trails" heading and the block of repeated inquiries—about a third of a page per issue, six full pages a year for other matter, fiction or departments.

Yes, we talk about a third of a page as if it were a big thing. If you are interested in such things you might examine into our general struggles to save space, even a line of space. For example, look over the standing matter in "A. A.," or the Service Page, or the notes at the head of other departments. Practical experiment has proved that the things said in these need to be said; a department needs a heading, for make-up, psychological and informative reasons; there is a limit to the smallness of type you can use. Allow for these facts, and then try to condense present forms. I think you'll find they're already packed pretty tight.

Why this effort to save little dabs of space? Well, add all those dabs together and they mean the saving of a very considerable number of pages a year—pages we can fill with more fiction or more department matter for your entertainment. Also the pressure is strong—the Camp-Fire cache is my despair, for it is filled and overflowing with good stuff and we can find space for only so much of it per issue. The "A. A." cache is equally running over with good material. Every time we save a bit of space somewhere it lets in a bit more of this good reading. Making this change in handling "Lost Trails" gives you six more pages of reading per year and loses none of the meat of "Lost Trails."—A. S. H.

Digitized by Google

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES TO READER

These services of *Adventure*, mostly free, are open to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules**, thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months** between sending and publication.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application*. We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 24 T Wharf, Boston, Mass., can supply Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: Twenty-two copies, various dates. $2.00 takes lot. No separate copies.—Address R. R. SMITH, 17 Somerset Street, Lowell, Mass.

WILL SELL: All of 1920, except Mid-Jan. All of 1921. 48 copies in good condition. Five dollars.—Address CECIL W. FINICLE, 312 Elm St., Neligh, Nebr.

WILL SELL: Issues from May, 1919 to December, 1921. 64 copies. All in A. 1. condition. Covers intact. Best offer accepted.—Address E. J. LANDGRAFF, 141 Wyckoff Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

WILL BUY: May, June, Oct., Dec., 1914; Jan., Feb., July, Aug., Dec., 1915; Apr., May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Nov., 1916; all of 1917 except Jan., July, Aug.; Nov., and 1st Dec., 1918. Will pay twenty-five to thirty-five cents each.—Address C. R. EDWARDS, Greensboro, North Carolina.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessay to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. use fiction of almost any length; under 3,000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the first issue of each month.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

(*See Camp-Fire, page* 183)

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of the last issue of each month.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Digitized by Google

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service (except our assaying and oil services) free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1, 2. The Sea. In Two Parts
3, 4. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
5, 6. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
7. Australia and Tasmania
8. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
9. New Guinea
10. Philippine Islands
11. Hawaiian Islands and China
12. Japan
13. Asia, Southern
14—20. Africa. In Seven Parts
21. Turkey and Asia Minor
22, 23. Balkans. In Two Parts
24. Scandinavia
25. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
26, 27. South America. In Two Parts
28. Central America
29, 30. Mexico. In Two Parts
31—37. Canada. In Seven Parts
38. Alaska
39. Baffinland and Greenland
40—45. Western U. S. In Six Parts
46—49. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
50—53. Eastern U. S. In Four Parts
Our Assaying and Oil Services
Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
Old Songs That Men Have Sung
Fishing in North America
Mountains and Mountaineering
Standing Information
Lost Trails

A Trip Across South America

PRACTICAL help for a couple of gobs who plan a real adventure:

Question:—"I wish to ask your advice in regard to a trip to and through South America.

My buddy and I have both knocked around considerably and feel able to take care of ourselves under any conditions which might arise on a trip of this kind. We spiel "adobe" Spanish such as is used in Mexico. The main object of the trip is just adventure and excitement, although we expect to do a little prospecting in the Andes. We also expect to take a number of kodak pictures on the trip.

We have planned to start from Guayaquil, Ecuador, then to Riobamba or Quito by rail. Then east on foot, hunting, fishing and prospecting as we

Digitized by Google

go. We expect to spend considerable time in this district—about two or three months at least. It is also quite possible that we may take up land and settle there. However, that will not be definitely decided until we have looked the country over. So we wish to be equipped to continue east to some tributary of the Amazon. Then by canoe or steamer to the east coast.

Now the questions, of which there are many:

1. What game may we expect to find?

2. We each have a Krag Army rifle .30 cal., which has been remodeled for sporting use with plenty of ammunition for the same. How would that be for that country?

3. Have heard that it would be difficult to take a .45-cal. revolver into those countries because of trouble which might arise at the customs house. Which would be best, a .45-cal. single or double action or a .38-cal. Colt's Army Special? We have both, with plenty of ammunition.

4. How would a 12-gage shotgun with brass shells and reloading-gear for same, be?

5. Could you give us some suggestions in regard to a medicine-kit to be taken along?

6. Could you give us some idea of what the trip would cost?

7. How about clothing, bedding, etc.?

7. How about taking some beads, knives and trinkets to trade to the Indians for such supplies as we would need from them?

9. What parts of our equipment should we get in the States and what part down there?

10. What time of the year would be best to start?

11. Where can we get some information on the amount of duty which we would have to pay upon the articles which we brought from the States?

12. My buddy and I are both pretty strong for Bull Durham tobacco. Would it be best to take a supply along, or could we secure any reasonably good tobacco there? We have both smoked various kinds of Mexican cigarets and survived to tell about it.

13. Could you give us some information on the mining laws of Ecuador?

14. Can kodak supplies be secured there, or would we have to take them from the States?

I realize that I really should have written to Mr. Young for information on Ecuador; but I understand that he is away on some sort of an expedition or other; and as most of the trip will be in Brazil I decided to send it all to you. Hope that you will pardon me for that and do what you can for me.

If this is published in *Adventure* please withhold my name."— —— ——, Sub Chaser 299, San Diego, Cal., care of Postmaster.

Answer, by Dr. Goldsmith:—1. You would find a great variety of game: Mammals—monkeys, several species, jaguars (American tigers), pumas (American lions), *tigrillos* (*Felis pardalis*), foxes, bears (edible), marsupials, rodents (many species), some of which are very good to eat; sloths, tapirs, numerous species of deer; birds— condors, parrots, macaws, tucans, pheasants, quails, ducks, wild turkeys and many smaller birds.

2, 3 and 4. The weapons you mention seem to me to be all right. I should incline to the .38 Colt Army Special in the way of pistol. Your twelve-gage shotgun and brass shells would be fine. If you have to buy another shotgun, it might be well to take along a ten gage and some buck-shot or duck-shot.

5. You might take a small leather case with a few bottles of medicine; some cathartic pills; quinin tablets, with cotton in the bottles to keep them from shaking; iodin, aqua ammonia (for stings). Remember that you can get many such things in the towns.

6. The steamship rate to Guayaquil is $230. As to what you would spend after you leave Guayaquil, all would depend on how far you go and how long you stay. Travel off the railways, in the country, and particularly in the wilds, is cheap. Provisions are simple and they do not cost much; and when you have to hire natives, they work for very little. I should think you might live for one dollar a day under such circumstances.

7. As to clothing: Have plenty of light-weight, strong, simple clothing. You ought to have some woolen underclothing, and a warm overcoat or poncho (a blanket with a hole in the middle) and a rubber poncho (a rubber covering with a hole in the middle). As to footwear: When you are in the wilds you would find the *alpargatas* (native shoes made of hemp or matting, in the form of sandals) excellent for tramping in the country. You can get these anywhere.

You ought not to try to carry any bedding. You can buy the best sort of light-weight hammock in Guayaquil or elsewhere in Ecuador. You can usually arrange to sleep in a hammock, which is preferable for many reasons.

8. If you take along articles to trade they ought to be useful; knives, muzzle-loading pistols (with powder and ball and caps), pieces of cheap cotton goods for the women, etc.

9. You will have to use your own judgment as to what to take along and what to get in Ecuador and elsewhere in South America. You will find that much can be secured in Guayaquil or Quito. You can depend on the local supplies for hats, rough footwear, ponchos and most rough clothing.

10. I should start in the midst of our Summer or in the midst of our Winter. Ecuador is under the equator. The cooler weather comes either when the sun is in the far north or far south.

11. As to duties: Write to the Consul-General of Ecuador, Mr. Gustavo R. de Icasa, 17 Battery Place, New York, regarding this.

12. You might take along as much as two pounds of tobacco each. You would not wish to load yourselves up too much with tobacco, and you can get Ecuadorian cigars and cigarets, which are fair.

13. You can get a permit to prospect for minerals, and if you discover gold or silver you can "denounce" it to the authorities and record a claim. Even when the property belongs to some one else you can usually make a satisfactory deal.

14. You can get kodak supplies in Guayaquil or Quito. It is not well to try to carry a large supply of films as they do not keep well in the tropics.

After you have finished with Ecuador you might make your way down to Peru to Iquitos, and from there on your way would be on the Amazon.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in alternate issues of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Digitized by Google

The Hopi Snake Dance

THESE Indians have a sure cure for snake-bite, apparently — a question that has been perturbing Camp-Fire comrades for many moons past. The joker is that they won't let loose of it:

Question:—"Am enclosing addressed, stamped envelop for reply.

Would like any and all information possible to obtain, pertaining to the Hopi Indians of Arizona.

Am especially interested in their Snake Dance; wish to learn as much about it as possible —when it occurs, what it consists of, who take part, what preparations are made for it, dancers, medicine or snake man? How are snakes caught? How are they taken care of? How used in dance? Are dancers bitten? If so what remedies used? Are snakes doctored in any manner? Is it possible to obtain pictures, and if so where?

Am not able to reach any library at present, but know there must be some one who is familiar with subject, therefore this query."—HARRY J. MASON, Maricopa, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—The Hopi Snake Dance comes in September. It consists of a lot of naked, mature men, dancing around in a circle, in grotesque fashion. They dance till they are worn out.

Only men of mature years, the fathers of the tribe, take part.

The preparation, as far as white men are allowed to see, consists in fasting and prayer to their snake god. The dancers fast long. The medicine men fast and scatter sacred meal, pour sacred water and conduct other pagan ceremonies, with much zeal and some secrecy.

The snakes are caught by bands of young bucks who race over the country with sacks or skins and forked snake-sticks. When they see a rattlesnake, they set the fork over his neck, close to his head, grab him close up with one hand and drop him in a sack.

The snakes require no care. Just kept in sacks till wanted. They are not kept long enough to injure them.

The dancers carry snakes in their hands and in their mouths.

They are bitten many times.

The secret of the remedies used is still a secret among white men. The Hopi will not reveal it.

Whether the snakes are doped or not is not known to us.

The Fred Harvey Company, operating the Santa Fé Railroad eating-houses, can most probably furnish pictures.

The Hopi Snake Dance is religious in character, though a devilish kind of religion. They endeavor to impress spectators with their power over reptiles, but it is my belief, and that of many others, that they have no particular power other than that given by certain drugs they make from plants and their confidence in handling them.

After the dance the dancers walk out to a certain cliff and throw up everything loose. Vomit like a seasick greenhorn.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

A Fish-Cannery for New Zealand

THE white-bait referred to by Mr. Mills below is not the same as that taken off the California coast. The New Zealand white-bait can be either the *Galaxias attenuatus* or the New Zealand smelt, whereas the California fish is *Lepidogobius lepidus*. And if you can get anything out of that chatter you're doing better than me:

Question:—"Would you be kind enough to advise me to what extent fish are being canned in New Zealand?

I have people with me who would go to some suitable place there provided suitable encouragement could be had from the Government.

They are operating canneries here and are experts in the business.

I wish to add that should there be any information you require here I would esteem it a favor if you would write me."—R. E. STEELE, San Francisco, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—Very little is done in the way of canning fish for export over here in New Zealand. The very small and tasty white-bait which is gathered from the mouths of certain of our rivers is canned, but mostly for home consumption. There is a small cannery in the far north—and this is about all.

I should imagine that your expert friends would do very well if they brought their knowledge over here, with a little capital. Indeed, the Government would probably give a subsidy if a good proposition were offered. Our seas teem with edible fish, which are there by the shipload for the harvesting. But our rivers do not teem with salmon, which is just being acclimatized to our waters from imported ova.

Mountain-Climbing

THERE are still a number of untamed places along the Atlantic seaboard:

Question:—"I would like to ask you a few questions on mountaineering and the equipment for mountain and forest travel. The extent of my outdoor life last Summer was a trip of one hundred and fifty miles by canoe down the Alleghany River, and a hike of about one hundred and thirty miles through the ranges of the Alleghany Mountains. The hike was—with about thirty-five-pound pack—from Tyrone, Pa., south through the Tussy Mountains, Dunning Mountains, across the Alleghanies at Pleasantville and almost straight west from there to Ligonier.

The trouble with the trip was that it was too tame. By that I mean each meal could be eaten in a town or village, they were so close together. And there was hardly a spot that we could find that wasn't within earshot of a farmer or more yet, kept awake by train whistles.

At one place in the mountains a girls' hiking club came past our camp. Can you imagine that? Our route by the map looks fairly wild. But such is not the case. It is too much settled.

Now I thought I would take advantage of your experience, and see if you could tell me some part of the Eastern States, from Maine to Virginia,

Digitized by Google

where a man can sort of lose himself in the woods. Two or three days from a store at least, or even longer. So much for that question.

Second, what do you use at night to shelter you from the cold and possible rain? We each had an Army shelter half, and pitched pup tents. There were four of us. But that is a lot of bother when you have to tear it down the next morning for the next day's hike. One reads of men taking long trips into the timber lands, who at night "roll up in their blankets." What I would like to know is how many blankets those birds use to keep from freezing to death in late October, or what they do when it rains in the night and the rain continues for a couple of days? I am speaking of men who do not have any pack-horses but carry all their quipment on their backs, as we did.

The third question is: What do you take as cooking-equipment? I had on my pack—strapped on the outside—an Army man's kit, grid, stew-pan and skillet and coffee-pot. That seems quite a bit in addition to the rest of one's outfit, but still they all came in handy. I don't see how some of these fellows we read of can carry a gun, enough clothing to keep them warm, something to keep them dry, a cooking-outfit and enough grub for a month, and still walk.

On my hike I started out with a heavy rifle. But after toting it ten miles I shipped it home, for it felt like a ton. My pack didn't bother me any after two or three days. After a week in the mountains I could have carried it thirty miles a day if necessary. But then I only had a day's grub beside my outfit.

Maybe you can tell me of some books covering the questions I have asked."—GEORGE M. COLBURN, Jeannette, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Bent:—It is certainly pretty hard to get away from the "Camp-Girls" these days! You should see them in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, where as many as a hundred cross the range in a day.

Now in answer to your first question I will mention several places where you can get away from the train whistle. The wildest mountain area in the East is found in the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec. I was there last Summer and saw the caribou herds roaming the summit of Mt. Albert.

You can look this place up in the atlas. It is two hundred miles long and about eighty miles wide. The only trace of civilization is found in the small French Canadian villages along the sea-coast.

This may prove to be too far away for your trip. In that case I can recommend the country around Mt. Ktaadn,* in Maine, as a very fascinating country. Mt. Ktaadn is comparatively high, 5,273 feet, and is practically in the center of Maine's great lake and river wilderness. The mere trip in to the mountain and back is sixty miles, and one would want to take about two weeks really to explore the mountain.

Both these regions would require you to carry all your food and clothing for the whole time you were to be gone. If you want to get away from cities but not quite so far away why don't you try the White Mountains of New Hampshire? They are a little more rugged than the Green Mountains, where they have the "Long Trail" of over a hundred miles. In the White Mountains you could plan a trip so that you would have to carry food for only two or three days at a time and yet go on a two or three weeks' trip without having to go through many towns.

Nearer your home are the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina. They are very rough and not quite so well adapted to trips by amateurs. But if you will look in the atlas and find the border between North Carolina and Tennessee you will see one of the wildest sections of the eastern U. S.

The Adirondacks are fine, too, but not so wild as the other places I have mentioned with the exception of the White Mountains and the Green Mountains of Vermont.

I have just sketched a few of the best places, and after you have decided which one you wish to go to if you will write me again I will be glad to go into detail about any one of the sections.

Now in regard to the other question about equipment. You can't get away from the "bother" of breaking camp every morning when you are on the move. That is part of the game.

The old-timers were men of great experience who knew how to take advantage of existing conditions. They had warm wool blankets, perhaps two, which are fairly warm even when wet. But they probably had a bit of canvas to throw over them to keep off most of the rain. But even then they went through very severe hardships in doing what we can do in comparative comfort. When they got really wet the only thing to do was to build a big fire and make the best of it.

I prefer some kind of a small, light tent which is really waterproof. A small "A" tent or in fact any of the light tents made by Abercrombie & Fitch is just the thing.

I never use blankets for high mountain work; they are too heavy. Wool quilts or down quilts are much lighter and warmer, but one has to be careful not to get them wet.

I have slept on the snow high in the mountains at Christmas time with two quilts and was warm. Such a sleeping-bag weighs about ten pounds. When we went in to the Shickshock Mountains of Gaspé last Summer we each had about fifty pounds, and for long trips this heavy weight can not be avoided.

Your cooking-outfit sounds very reasonable. I wouldn't try to make it smaller as the few ounces saved by the cutting out of a pail are not worth while.

Remember that the old-timer lived in a day when game was more plentiful than now, and besides he knew how to get it. Three weeks' food is about all one man can carry on his back when he can not expect to live off the country.

Maybe some day you'll tote a hundred pounds! The professional packers in the White Mountains carry seventy pounds day after day. It's a great life!

Read these books: "The Conquest of Mt. McKinley," by Belmore Browne; "The Ascent of Denali," by Hudson Stuck; "To the Headwaters of Peace River," by P. L. Haworth; "New Rivers of the North," by Hulbert Footner; "The Lure of the Labrador Wild," by Dillon Wallace; "The Forest," by Stewart Edward White.

Let me hear from you again and if there is anything I can do for you just call on.

Tagalog Dictionary

UNCLE SAM, publisher:

Question:—"Will you kindly inform me as to where I may be able to obtain a Tagalog-English or

*Mr. Bent's spelling. Me, I'm used to seeing it appear as Katahdin.

Digitized by Google

Tagalog-Spanish dictionary? And also will you please inform if I may be able to get some book that teaches Tagalog?

Hoping that I am not asking too much, will you please inform me how can I put in a subscription for *La Vanguardia*, a Spanish paper published in Manila?"—ANTONIO D. GONZALEZ, Camp Gaillard, Canal Zone.

Answer, by Mr. Connor:—You may procure a Tagalog-English dictionary from the War Department, Washington D. C., and if I mistake not, I believe from the Second (or Military Information) Division of the General Staff.

This book I refer to is bound in cloth and is the result of several years' study by the United States Army officer who is its author, and is suitable for the study of Tagalog and Visayan. It also gives various dialects of the Philippines.

To subscribe for *La Vanguardia* of Manila, P. I., make out a money order (United States) and submit it. If their rate of subscription is lower than the amount you make it for, they will return balance to you; if more than your money calls for they will place you on the subscription list for the period for which your order pays.

When you get something for nothing don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

The "Buck-Eye" Still Again

THESE little craft, that carry the oystermen of Chesapeake Bay hither and yon, seem to arouse much more interest than vessels of far greater pretentiousness. Here for instance is a typical communication:

Cape Charles, Va.

Buck-eye *vs.* bug-eye again. Say, where do your correspondents get that dope on bug-eye? Now I live on Chesapeake Bay and have lived and sailed on it for thirty years. I think I can settle this question, as I have not only sailed in them but have helped get the timber out of the woods to build them.

A description of a bug-eye is as follows, and any rigged different is a pungy:

They are chunk boats; in other words there is no framing or keel. The bottom consists of three or five logs or seven according to beam wanted. The center log is mortised out for the center-board well. The sides consist of any number of logs according to height. They are decked over generally with one hatch.

They have a forepeak where the cooking and eating is done, and cook generally sleeps down there. There is a cabin aft for the captain. Rarely more than two in crew—captain and cook.

In olden times they were steered with a tiller; then came the Jackson wheel; now, 'most all of them have regular wheels and most of them have a small engine or kicker in them. Now I never saw one without a bowsprit—except a wreck. They have two masts raking aft and carry fore and main sails and a jib. The jib has a bonnet which is taken out in heavy weather, as they labor and bury in the sea with much head sail. They all have knighthead and windlass forward, and open rail about six inches high, put on with bolt rods through top chunks. Each mast has one shroud, a Manila-tarred rope, seized with marlin and pine tar. Crissfield, Md., used to be a great place for building them.

I forgot to say the chunks are held together with bolt rods and the seams calked. Hope this will settle the bug-eye *vs.* buck-eye question.—M. D. HARRISON.

Commenting on this letter, Mr. Beriah Brown, the "A.A." expert who wrote the original definition of the buck-eye in response to an inquiry, has this to say:

Olympia, Wash.

For my part I have arrived at the conclusion that there ain't no such animal as the Chesapeake Bay "bug-eye." While all of your correspondents unite in the one thing that it is not the craft that I described, none of them agree as to what it really is.

One thing in Mr. Harrison's letter revives a dormant recollection. He says that the craft which some of your previous correspondents have described is known as a "pungy." This recalls to me the fact that there was such a craft 'way back when Adam was a little boy and I was a young man; it was always called, however, an "oyster pungy."

He thinks that I was describing the Chesapeake Bay canoe. Yet he goes ahead and describes as a bug-eye a craft which one of your previous correspondents had described as a Chesapeake Bay canoe!

Perhaps my memory was sadly in fault, and the craft which I did describe, which was in practically universal use among the oyster-tongers of a generation or two ago, was not even then called a bug-eye, as I thought it was. Perhaps also in the mind of those who have simply heard the name and have never seen it in print, there may be some confusion between the words, which have some faint and shadowy resemblance to each other in the spoken language—"bug-eye" and "pungy." Perhaps also there is not any of us who knows a —— thing about it.—BERIAH BROWN.

P. S.—By the way, the Maryland and the Virginia oystermen, when they meet on the waters of Chesapeake Bay, usually say it with shotguns. Perhaps they may have different names for the same craft, and have never been friendly enough to learn each other's language.

Converted Rifles

WHAT they did with Army shooting-irons when the Civil War ended. Maybe there's a tip in this for Washington today:

Question:—"Enclosed please find some sketches of a shotgun now in my possession. No one here has been able to tell me what make it is, and one person believed that it was an old rifle bored out for use as a 12-gage shotgun. It is center fire. Hammer on right side. Length over all, 4 ft. 3 in., 34-inch barrel, both front and rear sight; rear on the shell jam which lifts up and slides back when shell is removed. Shell slides down a slot from rear and on top into barrel. It appears to be a model of 1857, since a piece on the inside bears the inscription M 1857. Every little piece, even screws,

Digitized by Google

is numbered, and wooden pieces in Roman numerals. I should judge the gun weighs about 10 lbs. or so. It has very little kick for a single barrel. Can you give me some information about it?"—CHARLES S. KING, Forsyth, Mont.

Answer, by Mr. Thompson:—Your rifle or rather shotgun is a rifle bored out. Just after and during the last part of the Civil War a firm engaged in boring out old Army muskets and equipped them in the manner described by you. The firm was at Meriden, Conn., and from it started the present Parker Bros. Gun Co.

The date on the piece on the inside would apply to the musket in its original state. Many of these were sold, and I can recall the time when they averaged in price from $3 to $6, and when a boy it was the height of my ambition to obtain one.

Oil-Fields of Wyoming

JOBS that pay good money—when, as and if the jobs are there:

Question:—"I wish to locate in one of the Western States, preferably in or near to the oil-fields. Will you kindly advise me regarding the chances for employment in such a locality, and the wages paid? I have following qualifications:

Gas-engine expert (10 years) (auto, tractor), aviation and stationary.

Shop superintendent three years.

Farmer the rest (or first) of my life.

Age 32, married, one child. Not particular as to kind of work, so I can make a living, with a chance for a hunting trip every now and then.

Hope you won't think I'm making an employment agency out of you, for I'm not. I want to know some of the conditions in general about work around oil-fields."—G. H. STEELE, Hermon, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Middleton:—You state your preference of being in, or near, the oil-fields, so I will give you what dope I can on them. In this State (Wyoming) there are numerous large oil-fields, and new ones are being developed right along. Casper is, I believe, the center of the largest field in the State, while the Big Muddy field, located four miles from Glenrock, lays claim to being the second largest; I believe that if I were looking for a location I'd investigate here a little. I am mailing you a pamphlet which describes Glenrock more fully than I can.

Wages around the oil-fields are usually good, ranging from three to four dollars per day for common labor, to forty to sixty dollars per week for skilled mechanics—truck-drivers, men who can run a rig, etc.—and I've no doubt that a man with your qualifications as an expert with gas engines would be able to get something pretty good if the country were normal; but just now things appear to be very much unsettled and the State full of men, mechanics of all kinds, who are out of work, so for this reason I'd go a little slow in making a change until things get settled a little.

One doesn't have to go far from 'most any spot in Wyoming to get 'most any kind of hunting one wishes—cotton-tail, jacks, ducks, geese, sage chicken, grouse, mountain sheep, deer, elk, mountain lion and bear. Different localities for different game, of course, while the streams are all well stocked with trout.

There is always a demand for a good auto mechanic in Denver, and the wages are good—in some cases sixty dollars per week; but if it were I, I'd do a little investigating while the country was getting back to normal again; then try Wyoming, for there are certainly plenty of opportunities left in this State.

Snow Leopards

GOOD reason why their skins are prized by those so fortunate as to get a shot at them:

Question:—"You may remember that Kipling in "The Man Who Was," speaks of the skins of two snow leopards, shot on the road to Tibet, as being the pride of the mess.

I'd be glad to have you tell me the why and wherefore of the difficulty of shooting snow leopards."—O. W. GRIFFITH, Philadelphia, Penn.

Answer, by Capt. Giddings:—Please pardon the delay in answering your letter; I was down at the mouth of the Mississippi, duck-shooting.

I imagine the difficulty in the shooting of snow leopards is the finding of them. They inhabit the high rock hills—the Himalayas—and consequently few white men ever see them. However, the natives have, at times, more than their fill of the beasts, as they raid the villages and carry off goats and sheep. They have never been known to attack man.

The skin in my father's possession measures four feet five and three-quarter inches in length; tail, three feet one-half inch; height, twenty-three inches.

It is, you see, rather a case of "first find your rabbit."

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop. Exception: Our assaying and oil services.

Maine and Its Game

WISELY the Solons of Augusty are seeing to it that one main industry of the State—that of catering to sportsmen—shall not wither for lack of wild life:

Question:—"I would like some information about game in Maine. If I am not mistaken there was a number of game birds, black cock and woodgrouse (capercailzie) imported from Sweden by Minister W. W. Thomas about thirty or forty years ago. In what part of the State are they to be found, and is there any open season on them?

How far from Portland do I have to go to find fairly good moose-hunting? What kind of game and fish can be found and taken along the Kennebec River between Madison and The Forks?"—A. NORLING, Worcester, Mass.

Answer, by Dr. Hathorne:—The capercailzie, cock of the woods, Hungarian partridge, or any black game, or birds of the pheasant family, are protected by the Maine laws.

There is no moose-hunting in the State at present, as they are protected until 1925.

There is trout-fishing and some game such as deer, bear and small game, in the territory you mention.

Digitized by Google

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Comrade Richard L. Hynds, of Prairie City, Oregon, has dug up a new one on me. It reeks of the salt, salt sea and the sailor's hornpipe; likewise there's a lilt to it that would set a peg-legged man to dancing. Why don't some of you fellows write the music to it? Just listen to this—does any one know who wrote it?

Ten Thousand Miles Away

It's ho! for a gay and a gallant bark,
A brisk and a rattling breeze,
A gallant crew and a captain, too,
To carry me o'er the seas—
To carry me o'er the seas, my boys,
To my own true love so gay—
For the taking of a trip in a Government ship
Ten thousand miles away.

Chorus

And it's blow, ye winds heigh-ho,
It's a-roaming I will go—
I'll stay no more on England's shore,
So let your music play.
For I am off on the morning train
For to cross the raging main—
I am on the rove to my own true love
Ten thousand miles away.

My true love she is beautiful—
My true love she is fair;
Her eyes are blue as the violet's hue
And crimson is her hair;
And crimson is her hair, my boys—
And while I sing this lay,
She is doing the grand in a distant land
Ten thousand miles away.

Chorus

Dark and dismal was the day
When last I saw my Meg;
She had a Government band around each hand
And one around each leg—
And one around each leg, my boys,
All dressed in a suit of gray—
Oh, my love says she'll remember me
Ten thousand miles away.

Chorus

I wish I were a bo's'n tight
Or e'en a bombardier—
I'd hurry afloat in an open boat
And to my true love steer;
And to my true love steer, my boys,
Where the laughing dolphins play,
Where the shrimps and sharks are having their larks
Ten thousand miles away.

Chorus

Comrade Howard C. Mulligan of New York would like to get the words of "The Bob-Tailed Cannon-Ball," a song that was quite popular in the "rookie" camps during the war. Also he would appreciate being put next to a song, the name of which he has forgotten, which was a favorite with the rookies as well; the opening verse of which follows:

I loved a girl named Mary
On the coast of Maryland.
From her I learned to rob and steal
And cheat my fellow man.

Still another Mulligan wants is "I do' want no mo' army, Lawdy! I wanna go home."

Comrade A. Conway of Indianapolis would like to get the words of a song that was popular many years ago out in Nebraska—a hobo ditty entitled, "Some Going East—Some Going West."

My thanks to Comrade Walter Siemon of Pittsburgh for a couple of verses of a worthwhile hobo song entitled "Sleeping in the Box-Car."

Comrade J. W. Clarke of the Adventurers' Club, Chicago, encloses part of a song that used to be sung in the late '70s along the west coast of South America and in Brazil, later in Mexico in the early '80s. The following is all he can remember of it—perhaps some tuneful Adventurer can supply the balance:

You can travel where you may,
You'll find a Yankee every day;
He's the maker of each country he goes to.
Not a thing will take a start
But he's bound to take his part
And you can bet that he'll be found
Always right side up with care.

'Mexico has gone to grass;
Johnny Bull is o'er the sea;
Napoleon has played out his little game;
We gave Kossuth back his cash
And abolished whip and lash.
Oh, it's wonderful how we do it—
But we do.

Comrade Barrett of New York would like to get his hands on a song, both the title and the author of which he has forgotten. It runs thisaway:

'Twas 'way last Spring, one day in May,
When old Si Hubbard to me did say:
"There's a circus comin' to the town—
Let's go down and see the clown."
So we sold our barley, oats and corn—
In fact we 'most cleaned out the barn.
And when that circus came to town,
Si and I were first on the ground,
With high silk hats and red-topped boots
And all fitted out in brand-new suits.

LOST TRAILS—As explained in Camp-Fire of this issue, "Lost Trails" hereafter will be published in every other issue.

Digitized by Google

Comrade Eldridge H. Prickitt, of Gloucester City, N. J., in answer to Comrade Singer's query in *Adventure* for April 20th, as to the lines of the "coon" song—"Eats when I kin git it,"—etc.—referred us to Hugh Wiley's story in the *Saturday Evening Post* of March 8th, 1919, entitled "The Four-Leaved Wild Cat," in which the verses appear. Here they are:

I don't bother work, work don't bother me,
Ise fo' times as happy as a buh-humblebee.

I eats when I kin git it,
I sleeps mos' all de time,
I don't give a dog-gone if de sun don't neveh shine,
Dat's why I'm as happy as a buh-humblebee-ee—
I don't bother work, an' work don't bother me!

I kin ride a freight train;
I don't pay no fare,
I kin ride a freight train mos' anywhere.
Dat's why Ise as happy as a buh-humble-bee-ee—
I don't bother work, an' work don't bother me.

Comrade William Christ of Miller, Lake County, Ind., would like to get the words of "The Watering-Tank," a bit of verse with which he is somewhat familiar. I have never heard of it.

Comrade Parker Stone of Auburn, Maine, would like to learn the title and to get the complete words of a Wild-West bit of verse, a line or two of which runs like this—

I've roamed through Nevada and Texas
I've met bad-men in the mass.

Chorus

I'm no killer or bad-man,
But they tumble right down on the floor.

I've seen this last bit of stuff somewhere, but I can not for the life of me place it. Come through, *compadres*.

My hearty thanks to W. H. Fawcett, editor of the *Whiz Bang* of Robbinsdale, Minn., for a copy of the Winter Annual. Also to William A. Bell of Sigourney, Iowa, for a copy of Captain Jack Crawford's "Lariattes," containing some of the Poet-Scout's best stuff and well worth the possession.

Comrade Eugene J. Kerns of Saginaw, Mich., is on the trail for an old-time song entitled "Jim Blake", which runs thusly:

Jim Blake was a man with his heart in his hand,
No matter what people may say.
For whatever he done, he done with free will,
In the broad, open light of the day.

One of our readers who forgot to sign his name to his letter asks if we ever heard the following little ditty, sung to the tune of "I Want to Be an Angel." No, we never heard it; but we think we'd learn to sing it if some one would furnish the complete words. Here it is:

I want to be an Injun,
A Modoc or a Ute;
I'm tired of being a white man—
An unprotected brute.

The song was quite popular, he says, back in the '70's amongst the cowboys.

Comrade Charles Shepherd of No. 954½ Hollins St., Los Angeles, would like the words of a song named "Billy Leamont." It's a new one on me. Maybe some of you fellows can locate it.—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 745 Riverside Drive, New York.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

OCTOBER 10TH ISSUE

Beside the complete novel mentioned on the second page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

BAD LUCK — *J. D. Newsom*
May lead to strange adventures.

THE COURTSHIP OF CAPTAIN DRISCOLL — *Albert Richard Wetjen*
With yellow white men in an open boat.

THE WHITE DEVIL — *Albert E. Apple*
What happened when the tree-killer ran up against an Ojibway ex-convict.

THE CUSHIONS — *Max Bonter*
Hoboes, amateur and hard-boiled, do some unauthorized railroading.

OVER THE RIM OF THE RIDGE A Four-Part Story Part III — *Hugh Pendexter*
Nevada Territory—silver mines, gunmen, and a square gambler.

SEA WOLF — *F. St. Mars*
Grampus and narwhal try conclusions.

HARTLEY'S LUCK — *Eugene Cunningham*
A swift-shooting gun-man meets a worthy opponent.

A CAN OF JAM — *Leonard H. Nason*
Above the crash of bursting bombs sounds the battle-cry, "When do we eat?"

THE YELLOW STREAK — *Georges Surdez*
The man with the scarred face tells his story.

BLUE DICK — *Frank H. Huston*
A fightin' hoss.

Digitized by Google